



March 2020 | Vol. 23 • Issue 12

www.amusementtoday.com

Amusement Expo International 2020 set to 'jazz up' New Orleans

Exhibitors, educators converge on the Big Easy for event

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

NEW ORLEANS — Amusement Expo International (AEI), the annual trade event for the coin-op and revenue-generating amusement, music and family entertainment industry, is hitting the Big Easy with bells — and whistles and flashing lights and virtual reality headsets — on for three days, March 9-10.

The program, sponsored by the American Amusement Machine Assn. (AAMA) and the Amusement and Music Operators Assn. (AMOA), features a full day of education and two days of exhibition. Taking place Monday, March 9, at AEI's host hotel, the Hilton New Orleans Riverside, the educational sessions will pro-



The AEI 2020 trade show, also featuring the Laser Tag Convention and the National Bulk Vendors Assn. Conference/Trade Show,, takes place at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center March 10-11. AT/DEAN LAMANNA

vide instruction and information useful to business owners and operators. Two full days of exhibit time for sellers and buyers will follow on Tuesday, March 10, and Wednesday, March 11, at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

As in previous years, the

Laser Tag Convention and the National Bulk Vendors Assn. Conference/Trade Show will be co-located with AEI. More than 160 exhibitors had registered for the event as of mid-February.

This year's show, AEI's 11th, is the first to follow the announcement that AAMA and

AMOA have extended their partnership. Their joint event has enjoyed year-over-year growth since it debuted in 2010, with last year's show in Las Vegas drawing more than 3,000 industry professionals.

"Leadership from both organizations worked closely together

to draft a new agreement symbolizing a renewed commitment to our industry to produce an exceptional event for exhibitors and attendees," said Emily Dunn, president of AMOA.

"We've made great strides

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Fun Spot America adds coaster, breathes new life into Old Town



Fun Spot America Kissimmee's new roller coaster, Hurricane, is located at the south end of Old Town's main street and is visible from everywhere in the entertainment and shopping complex. AT/DAVID FAKE

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Fun Spot America Theme Parks opened its newest roller coaster, Hurricane, just before Christmas last year at its Kissimmee location. The installation of the coaster was the latest phase of the park's collaboration with the Old Town entertainment and shopping complex to encourage visitors to move throughout the entire Old Town complex, specifically to its far south end, where shops had been seeing a decline in foot traffic.

Because Fun Spot America Kissimmee's location is directly adjacent to the Old Town

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NEWSPAPER

POSTMASTER: Dated material.
PLEASE RUSH!
Mailed Monday, February 24, 2020

PRST STD
US POSTAGE
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Breakout year for FECs



Robinson

Multiple industry representatives have referred to family entertainment centers as the "evolution" of the amusement industry, the modern-day variation of the classic small amusement parks. They're ever adaptable and often uniquely immune to incumbent weather and temperature changes.

"Family entertainment centers make up the largest portion of IAAPA facility members."

That line was in the opening paragraphs to *Amusement Today's* recap of the 2019 IAAPA FEC Summit (March 2019). For many at AT, it was that line that drove home just how much the FEC industry has grown over the years and what a thriving part of the amusement industry it has become.

It was around this time that AT decided to make a concerted effort to increase our coverage of the FEC industry, showcasing the growing chains, product lines, innovations, attractions and trends which family entertainment centers encompassed.

After a solid year of taking a closer look at the evolution of FECs, the AT staff has definitely been impressed. The addition of traditional flat rides and unique roller coasters, and the expanded use of VR experiences, was only the beginning. FECs now feature skydiving experiences, expanded sports options, ziplining and larger go-kart tracks that bring to mind the wild courses of *Mario Kart*.

The FEC market has become so large, so varied and so full of innovation that AT's Golden Ticket Awards added a new category in 2019 expressly for the ever-changing FEC industry. "Breakout FEC of the Year" now recognizes the facility that has stepped up its game and made moves to become a major player in its marketplace. C.J. Barrymore's of Clinton Township, Michigan, took home the award in 2019 after adding four new outdoor attractions — including a coaster, a drop tower and a Ferris wheel — and positioned itself as the go-to amusement attraction in the Detroit area.

With the additions and expansions of FECs already announced for 2020 — and even more to come — we are eager to see what family entertainment center will take home the Golden Ticket in 2020 ... and beyond.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Alexa Kinnison, Content Marketing Manager, RCI Adventure Products

A steadfast commitment to safety

Creating fun experiences for guests is important if you want to sustain a successful, family-friendly operation, but there is one thing that should surpass all else when it comes to your patrons: safety. Attractions available for guests to interact with at a facility should be dependable, inspected regularly and operated by trained staff. Participants should not be consumed with the feeling that an attraction is unsafe while they are on it. They should be focused solely on having a good time with those they care about. At RCI Adventure Products, we keep participant safety at the forefront while also sprinkling in a healthy dose of fun for good measure.

While our team of engineers, designers and installers ensure that every RCI product is structurally sound and meets safety standards such as those dictated by ASTM, OSHA, ANSI and EN 1090, trained RCI operators, trainers and inspectors make certain that attractions are correctly operated for participants. Before we allow them to operate or inspect, individuals



Kinnison

must partake in and complete the RCI training program in its entirety.

All operators are required to be trained by either RCI or an RCI-certified trainer, and trainees are expected to complete two days of practical, onsite training as well as pass a written test in order to acquire a certificate. No one is allowed to operate an RCI attraction sans proper certification because safety is the utmost priority.

In addition, operators are mandated to re-certify each year in order to retain their certification. RCI has witnessed more than 9,600 passed operator certifications. Combining this with annual inspections upholds a dedication to safety.

Wanting to further enhance existing safety efforts, RCI debuted a Sky Trail safety entrance in 2019 that works in conjunction with the aerial attraction to aid operators in the on-boarding routine for each participant. No matter what product a guest interacts with, they must remain safe while they have fun.

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.



Amusement Today is an independent, privately-owned trade newspaper published 14 times per year by Amusement Today Inc., P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005. Print issues are \$50 per year and are mailed Presort Standard Postage (permit No. 2069) Pre-Paid Fort Worth, Texas. The entire contents of this newspaper, and its related websites, are Copyrighted and Trademarked 2020 by Amusement Today Inc., all rights reserved.

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National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives



2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Michael Browning, Urban Air Adventure Parks

A big kid at heart, **Michael Browning** is having the time of his life bringing his enthusiasm, curiosity and passion to his position as CEO of **Urban Air Adventure Parks**. In 2011, Michael founded the full-service FEC company with the help of his dad; today, he has 115 locations, with another 145 in development. The facilities feature climbing walls, warrior obstacle courses, tube playgrounds, rope courses, trapezes, spinning and flipping bumper cars, trampolines and more. His focus is to be authentic, and he places a huge importance on what moms in the marketplace think. Michael was the 2019 recipient of **IAAPA's** Young Professional of the Year award. Take note, ... he's one to watch!

Title: CEO & Founder

Number of years in the industry:
56 in dog years or something like that. 10 years.

Best thing about the industry:
Watching families experience pure joy when they are participating in active play at Urban Air Adventure Parks around the country.

Favorite amusement ride:
Hulk at Universal Studios Orlando Resort.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... A lawyer. I enjoy reading John Grisham books. My mom always jokes that I like to argue. One of my good friends is an attorney and he always asks if I stayed in a Holiday Inn Express last night, because I am acting like I am a licensed lawyer. Google it.

Biggest challenge facing our industry:
Increasing hourly wages. We are in the people business. We employ tens of thousands of people and service tens of millions of people. We need to continue to improve how we hire, who we hire, how we train and how we retain.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... Grand Openings. The excitement and energy start before the doors open from fans in line. The anticipation is hard to replicate. It is like the first kickoff at the Super Bowl!

Favorite childhood TV show: *Double-Dare!*

If you could learn something new tomorrow and succeed at it for life, what would it be? Storytelling. The world belongs to storytellers. Taking a complex concept and breaking it down into something digestible through the art of an entertaining story. It can rally people around a cause and gives them a vision to join or follow.

It's March! My favorite springtime activity is ... Snow skiing! It's a rare time that subconsciously allows me to escape, and I love it.

What would you say is a big waste of time? Worrying about things you can't control. I don't focus on the "what-ifs"

This always makes me smile: My little girls (ages eight and five) running up to me after a long day of work as if I had been gone for days.



Michael Browning was the recipient of IAAPA's 2019 Young Professional of the Year award during IAAPA Expo 2019. COURTESY URBAN AIR ADVENTURE PARKS

My idea of a good surprise is ... I like pranks. And if the prank elicits tears of joy, even better.

The most comfortable place in my home is ... The crack between the two pillows on my couch. My head fits perfectly in it and the pressure from the pillows drowns out the noise of everything around me. Don't tell my kids.

What would you rather give up ... your TV or your computer? TV for sure. I occasionally watch sports or Netflix to fall asleep, but I like to read.

Yuckiest thing I have ever eaten: Ant larvae.

Your head or your heart? Heart. I try to validate my emotions with my brain and data.

What topic makes your brain ache? GAAP accounting. I think I would rather watch paint dry.

If you could invent one thing that could make the world a better place what would it be? A cure for cancer. I had a rough 2019 with friends and family battling this awful disease.

What month of the year best describes who you are? January. I am a planner. I like to achieve and set goals, and this is the month when we typically tackle our business plan.

For me, a big adventure is ... Worldly travel. Immersing yourself in a new culture.

The last time I went to the beach was ... My family goes often. We are fortunate to have a second home in Destin, Florida.

A round of golf with Tiger Woods or shooting hoops with LeBron James: Hoops with LeBron.

If I had an extra day in the week, I would spend it ... Working. I love my job and the journey.

The first thing I do in the morning is ... Check my phone. I know, bad habit.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Scholarship honors



RUST, Germany — Europa-Park Founder Roland Mack (left) honored three students from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology for their extraordinary achievements. The Roland Mack Scholarship provides 300 euros a month as students work toward a master's degree for two years. Mack has been promoting students since 2012 with 68 already benefiting from the special study grant. Mack studied at the Technical University of Karlsruhe (today's KIT) from 1969 to 1974. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

Business, Mr. Rogers style

In 1988, my husband, **Bob Minick**, received a call from **Idlewild** amusement park in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, about a new project. The park was collaborating with **Fred Rogers** of *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* television fame to develop an attraction that would transport visitors via trolley to a life-size version of the "Neighborhood of Make-Believe" popularized by the program.

Bob and **Rich Poling**, head designer of **Minick Associates**, visited Rogers and Idlewild for their input on our company's role. During the initial meeting, Rogers, not unexpectedly, asked Bob and Rich about themselves and their families. Bob told Rogers about our two-month old son, **Randall Minick**.

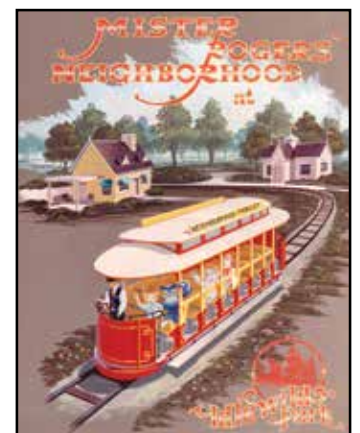
During the next meeting, Rogers presented Bob with a package of autographed books for Randall. Rich leaned in to look at them and said, "It's a shame Randall won't get to touch them — his mom will display them on a high shelf or frame them."

Rogers excused himself and returned with an identical set of books, not autographed, that Bob and I could use to read to Randall and Randall could read to us as he grew older.

Smiles all around. I still have the autographed and unautographed books, plus Bob and Rich's wonderful memories of meeting Mr. Rogers.

Bob had a print of Rich's three-by-five-foot rendering of the attraction's trolley framed for our office, where it brightened everyone. In the near future, it will be displayed at the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives** in Plainview, Texas.

Lottie Minick is a 45-year attractions industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. Her column features behind-the-scenes anecdotes of her own and from those who have worked in the business. Got a fun industry story? Email lottie@minickassociates.com.



COURTESY MINICK ASSOCIATES

Amusement Expo International 2020

March 9-11, 2020, New Orleans, Louisiana

Exhibitor Listing

Adrenaline Amusements.	1139	Evolve Technologies.	563	Patriot Gaming / JCM.	500
Allied Specialty Insurance, Inc.	606	Firestone Financial.	751	Payment Alliance International.	945
American Alpha, Inc.	167	Fish Game Kings / Bubba Technology Group.	861	Peek-A-Boo Toys.	247
American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA)	1061	Flagship Carpets.	852	Perky's Pizza.	660
American Changer.	159	Fun Express.	528	PhoenixDarts USA, Inc.	1149
American Pinball Inc.	501	Fun Hoops Inc.	1013	PIA Products.	760
AMI Entertainment.	339	Fun Spot Manufacturing.	1118	Polycade.	667
AMOA Coin-Op Cares Education & Charitable Foundation.	125	Funovation.	1009	Primero Games.	451
Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA)	1061	Funshare Amusement Co., Ltd.	505	Prominent Games LLC.	853
Amusement Connect.	746	Game Time International.	1147	Promoting Services Inc.	727
Amusement Products.	955	GameBox Builders, LLC.	607	Pyramid Technologies, Inc.	109
Amusement Today	361	Gold Standard Games.	206	QNC Inc/ Quik 'n Crispy.	961
AmusementRC.	1121	goodgrow.	826	Quattronics.com.	761
Andamiro Co. Ltd.	738	Heartland.	347	QubicaAMF Bowling Products.	850
Apple Industries.	839	HMS Monaco.	661	Redemption Plus.	1042
Arachnid.	239	Hoffman Mint.	163	RePlay Magazine.	348
ARC-Studios.	617	Hownd.	1055	Rhode Island Novelty.	258
Art Attack.	568	Hyperdeck by MajorMega.	261	Rides 4 U, Inc.	647
Artoy Trading LLC.	405	IAAPA.	401	Rilix LLC.	767
AstroSystems Inc.	520	IGPM.	814	S & B Candy and Toy / St Louis Game Company.	353
ATM Merchant Services.	524	Incredible Technologies.	729	SEGA Amusements International LTD.	539
ATM's America.	560	Innovative Concepts in Entertainment, Inc.	421	Sacoa Debit Card System.	367
AVS Companies.	561	Innovative Technology.	509	SafePark USA.	1124
Bandai Namco Amusement America, Inc.	139	Innovative Vending Solutions LLC.	1048	Scale- Portal.	1047
Banilla Games.	612	Intercard.	1039	Sektor VR.	800
Barron Games.	461	International Currency Technologies Corp.	812	Semnox.	1060
BarZcash.	605	iPlayCO.	566	Shaffer Distributing.	613
Battle Company.	204	JET - Jennison Entertainment Technologies.	413	Smart Industries Corp.	639
Bay Tek Entertainment.	739	King Plush.	267	SMART Software.	946
Betson Enterprises.	213	Klopp: Money Handling Equipment.	651	Speedy's One Stop Repair Service.	105
Big Daddy Games.	545	Kole Imports and Closeouts.	1019	Stern Pinball, Inc.	121
Bissell Commercial.	702	Labor Saver Solutions.	809	Sureshot Redemption.	847
BMI Merchandise.	340	LAI Games.	205	Suzohapp.	1038
Bob's Space Racers, Inc.	939	Laser Tag Museum.	1000	Tack Electronics, Inc.	363
Bowling Center Management.	600	LaserBlast.	549	The Really Big Crane Company.	755
BoxBlaster VR.	707	Laserforce Laser Tag.	1007	Tigapo.	949
Brunswick Bowling Products, LLC.	604	Lasertag.com by Zone.	418	TouchMagix Inc.	644
Captains Auction Warehouse.	713	Lasertron.	1044	TouchTunes.	622
Cardinal Xpress.	655	LaZER Runner Inc.	822	Tourist Attractions & Parks Magazine.	301
CenterEdge Software.	1023	Live Oak Bank.	653	Trestle.	867
Chetu Inc.	824	Lock America, Inc.	338	Triotech.	113
Chicago Gaming Company.	805	Magic Play, LLC.	300	Twisted Quarter, Inc.	201
Coastal Amusements, Inc.	439	MagneTag.	608	UNIS Technology.	251
Coin Op Marketplace.	704	Max Amusements.	723	Univest Capital.	404
Complete Signs.	908	McGowan Amusement Group.	1152	US Bowling Corporation.	752
CPI- Crane Payment Innovations.	715	Minority Media.	313	USA Technologies.	762
Creative Works.	1027	Moss Distributing.	400	Valley Dynamo.	323
Cypress ATM.	346	Nayax.	107	Venco Business Solutions.	460
Delta Strike.	1125	NECA.	705	Virtuix.	553
Digital Centre America Inc.	200	North American Dart Organization (NADO).	950	VRsenal.	1153
Elaut Group.	149	nWave Pictures Distribution.	1053	We Create Entertainment.	601
Embed.	406	Omega Carpet.	467	WIK games.	567
Entropy Cabinet Solutions Inc., USA.	649	Pace-O-Matic, Inc.	719	WORLD PLUSH.	562
Event Rental Systems.	662	Party Center Software.	1123		

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in enhancing the AEI experience for both exhibitors and attendees over the past couple of years," said **Pete Gustafson**, executive vice president of AAMA. "We're thrilled to continue our partnership with AMOA to build an even better product for the future. And what better way to kick off the next decade for AEI than in the Big Easy?"

Traditionally highlighting out-of-home, pay-to-play entertainment for family entertainment centers (FECs), arcades, bars, restaurants and other locations where people seek diversion, the event more recently has placed special focus on the growing VR product category. For the third year running, AEI's VR Summit is offering an education track, collective floor space for VR exhibitors and corporate sponsorships.

"VR has definitely become much more of a factor in location-based entertainment," said industry veteran **Bob Cooney**, author of *Real Money from Virtual Reality* (2019) and returning VR Summit curator. "The question is no longer if operators should go with VR, but which VR products they



should choose. We've reached the tipping point, and now is the time to capitalize."

Elmhurst, Illinois-headquartered technology research and advisory company **Technavio** recently predicted that the location-based VR market will grow by \$1.48 billion by 2023.

In addition to VR, the curriculum of the 8.5-hour AEI Education Day on March 9 will feature tracks developed by and for practitioners, includ-



Author and motivational speaker Larry Johnson will deliver the opening keynote address at AEI 2020, which will be headquartered at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside. COURTESY AMUSEMENT EXPO INTERNATIONAL; HILTON

ing FECs, laser tag, and amusements, games and music. More than 20 sessions featuring 35 individual presenter/panelists will cover subjects such as valuating/selling routes, creating marketing plans, pinball, cyber security, escape rooms, card-stored/cashless systems, unique promotions, ATM best practices and rewards/membership programs.

Larry Johnson, author of *Absolute Honesty: Building a Corporate Culture that Values Straight Talk and Rewards Integrity* (2003), will deliver an

opening keynote on leadership, customer service, project management and honesty in business. The day's final session will feature a closing keynote by **Ed Rensi**, a former 13-year president of **McDonald's Corp.**, who will speak on management, consumer trends, franchising and employee relations.

Visit AEI's website for additional information on registration, lodging and specially selected New Orleans tours, as well as the complete event schedule.

• amusementexpo.org

AEI at a glance...**Monday, March 9**

AEI Education Day

Registration: 7 – 8:30 a.m.
Hilton New Orleans Riverside

AEI Trade Show (setup only)

Registration: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Ernest N. Morial Conv. Ctr.

Seminars & Panels

8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Hilton New Orleans Riverside

All-Industry Gala

5:15 – 7:15 p.m.
Hilton New Orleans Riverside

Tuesday, March 10

AEI Trade Show

Registration: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Floor Open: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Ernest N. Morial Conv. Ctr.

Beers and Cheers

5 – 6 p.m.
Hall C, AEI Town Sq., #1061

Wednesday, March 11

AEI Trade Show

Registration: 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Floor Open: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Ernest N. Morial Conv. Ctr.

Hesch-Related Happenings

Happy Hour: 2 – 4 p.m.
Scholarship Raffle: 3 – 3:30 p.m.
Hall C, AMOA Coin-Op Cares,
Booth #125

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Indiana Beach, Fantasy Island rides offered for sale by Apex



The Chance Giant Gondola Wheel (above) and Air Crow Flying Scooter from Larson are among the classic Indiana Beach attractions being offered for sale. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



ALISO VIEJO, Calif. — **Apex Parks Group** contacted multiple amusement facilities in February with a list of several rides and games being liquidated from two of its properties: **Indiana Beach** in Monticello, Indiana, and **Fantasy Island** in Grand Island, New York. At press time, there has been no confirmation if either park will be opening for the 2020 season.

Indiana Beach was owned by the **Spackman** family for more than 80 years. Located on Lake Shafer in Monticello, Indiana, the park was unique, offering a boardwalk-style atmosphere of family fun in the middle of Indiana cornfields. In 2008, the Spackman family sold the park to **Morgan RV Resorts**. Apex Parks Group purchased the park from Morgan in 2015.

The park was home to **Custom Coasters International's** first-ever wooden coaster with steel support structure, the Hoosier Hurricane, as well as a water park and several flat rides installed over the waters of Lake Shafer.

Fantasy Island welcomed its first visitors in 1961 at a size of only 12 acres. Over time, it grew to its current size of 85 acres. Ownership changed hands throughout the decades, but the park found its greatest success under the hands of **Martin DiPietro**, who changed the name of the park to Martin's Fantasy Island. It operated under this name until the park was sold to Apex Parks Group in 2016.

Among its assortment of rides, the park's crowning jewel was Silver Comet, a wooden coaster built by Custom Coasters International in 1999. Combined with three smaller steel roller coasters, flat rides and seven water park attractions, Fantasy Island entertained guests in the Niagara Falls area each summer.

While the majority of each park's rides were listed as available for sale, it remains unknown if some of the attractions may be relocated to other Apex properties. Despite attempts, Apex Parks Group could not be reached for comment.

• apexparksgroup.com



Fantasy Island attractions looking for a new home include the Zamperla Flight vertical swing (left) and Pinfari Max's Doggy Dog Coaster (above). AT/TIM BALDWIN



Hurricane is a 52-foot-tall, 1,300-foot-long E&F Miler Industries' Hi-Miler model that previously operated as Jack Rabbit and Viking Voyage in Branson, Missouri, and Valdosta, Georgia, respectively. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA; AT/DAVID FAKE



► FUN SPOT Continued from page 1

complex, **Mark Arie**, Fun Spot America Theme Park's COO and co-owner, told *AT* that Old Town approached them in 2017 to add several rides to the south end of Old Town's main strip. Initially, a Paratrooper, Tilt-A-Whirl, Crazy Couch and carousel were installed on the Old Town property. Around the same time, Old Town purchased a new Ferris wheel as an icon for its remodeled front entrance and contracted Fun Spot America to manage its operation. Then in mid-2019 Old Town reached out to Fun Spot America again to ask if they had any additional ideas for the area. "That was when my brother (**John Arie, Jr.**, CEO and co-owner) said, 'You know, there used to be a roller coaster back there, and there happens to be one for sale right now,' and basically, just like that, the deal was struck," said Arie. Fun Spot America Theme Parks purchased the coaster, and by September the coaster was on location and being assembled. "We had hoped to have it open by Thanksgiving, but the

construction ran a little longer than expected," Arie said.

With Hurricane now open, Arie says it, and the other flat rides already in the area, are doing what they intended them to do, and traffic to that area of Old Town has significantly increased.

The coaster, an **E&F Miler Industries'** (Portland, Oregon) Hi-Miler/52 model, is a steel sit-down coaster standing 52 feet tall, with a track length of 1,300 feet. With a height requirement of 42 inches, Hurricane is considered a family coaster. It operates with one train consisting of three cars with two riders per car.

Hurricane has had several previous lives in its journey to its new home. New, it was purchased by **Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation** for **Celebration City** in Branson, Missouri, where it opened as Jack Rabbit for the park's rebranded grand reopening in 2003. It operated there until the park was shuttered at the end of the 2008 season. In 2010 the coaster was relocated to **Wild Adventures**, in Valdosta, Georgia, a park newly acquired at the time by the Herschend Family Entertainment

Corporation, where it operated as Viking Voyage until 2018. Then when Fun Spot America Theme Parks purchased the coaster, they initially relocated it to **Fun Spot America Atlanta** in Fayetteville, Georgia, where it was stored until being sent to the company's Kissimmee, Florida, park.

When asked what is next up for Fun Spot America Theme Parks' three parks, Arie said, "I call 2020 'the year of the vision,' because we have no plans to add anything to the parks. What we are doing is looking at each park, every ride, refurbishing, repairing, making sure everything is looking good. For 2021, I'm sure we'll start thinking about new attractions leading up to and around IAAPA." He said that growth at the Atlanta park is a big focus for the future since the Orlando and Kissimmee parks are somewhat landlocked.

He added: "We'd definitely like to add a new coaster to the Atlanta park. We have over 100 acres up there, and only about 15 are developed right now. Who knows, in 15 years or so, that could be our flagship park."

• fun-spot.com



> > > Streamlining FEC activities and operations is as easy as...



1

CONTROL

all aspects of
your business
operations

> > >



2

DELIGHT

guests with a
fun, easy-to-use
experience

> > >



3

SUCCEED

with a simple
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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

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El Dorado Frontier — a small-scale theme park with a big heart

Long Beach fun spot revives the Old West with artistry, passion

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LONG BEACH, Calif. — Growing up in Southern California, **Patricio Wolovich** happily lost himself in the rustic environs of Ghost Town at Knott's Berry Farm and Adventureland and Frontierland at Disneyland. At home, he enjoyed sitting with his dad watching classic Westerns on TV.

Now a father himself, with a career in creating props and sets for Hollywood productions, he spends his days dreaming of ways to make the Old West fresh — and fun — for families.

Wolovich owns **El Dorado Frontier**, located on five acres formerly known as **Caboose Corners** within Long Beach's sprawling **El Dorado East Regional Park**. The mini-theme park is an ongoing project he began constructing in August 2018 around two major attractions — a vintage, preexisting railroad ride with a quarter-scale steam locomotive and a recently added, newly reimagined 1987 **Chance Rides** carousel.

"I was always fascinated with building things and intrigued by textures and faux finishes," Wolovich told *Amusement Today*. "With my interest in film and props and puppets, it all kind of went hand in hand."

Born in South America and raised in Long Beach from the age of four, Wolovich was a self-described latchkey kid who spent a lot of time with friends at the regional park. "There's a nature center and a lake, and we'd go fishing. We had no supervision, but we weren't troublemakers."

In the early 1990s, Wolovich befriended **Tom and Greg Ruvolo**. The father-and-son team had spent several years refurbishing a 1946-built train ride that originally operated in Santa



With a train ride and custom-themed carousel among its detailed attractions, El Dorado Frontier offers pay-as-you-go activities. The community donated to the restoration of the carousel's horses. Owners Patricio and Marisol Wolovich handle operations. COURTESY PATRICIO WOLOVICH/EL DORADO FRONTIER

Ana Canyon, about 20 miles east of the regional park, and they were installing its 1.5-mile-long, 18-gauge track in what would become Caboose Corners.

"When they got the train running, I used to ride it all the time, and when I had kids, I brought them to ride it," he said. The Ruvolos had plans to add attractions around the train, named **El Dorado Express**, but according to Wolovich, they had difficulty maintaining the railroad and lost interest in operating it.

Wolovich was making a decent living building sets and props — the 1997 disaster movie *Volcano*, the TV series *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* and **Universal Studios Halloween Horror Nights** are among his credits — and also owned a custom home aquarium design business. His work grew out of the cardboard model-making he did as a child; as an adult, he had become adept at mold-making, casting and working with various materials.

All the while, he felt Caboose Corners had potential. "I thought, how cool would it be to have a little theme park? I was always drawn by the aesthetic of the Old West and felt it would be perfect for this place."

About five years ago, the Ruvolos, who were ready to retire, approached Wolovich about buying the train. Wolovich gathered a team of artists and creatives to create a package of theme park conceptual art for the city's parks and recreation department.

Although confident in his proposal, Wolovich had to sit tight while Long Beach issued a request for proposal to attract bids from other potential operating entities. With no one else submitting proposals, Wolovich began what would become three years of negotiations with the city to obtain a concession permit and settle on terms. The city gave him five years without rent in exchange for his investment in Caboose Corners, which would involve upgrading the



train and its station, adding a carousel, and enclosing the area to create a themed environment within the larger regional park.

"I was adamant about needing enough time to make our money back, or to at least build everything," he said. "The city gets a percentage of what we gross and we get a few years rent-free to actually build the place and get it up to speed."

Wolovich took on an investment partner, **Jeff Barr**, during the process while retaining control of the endeavor. The funding influx has allowed him to speed up the park's development.

Yet there have been challenges. Tools worth about \$25,000 were stolen from the site. And the 36-foot-diameter carousel, purchased from a Florida seller, turned out to be a "disaster" when it arrived. Wolovich received helpful input from **Lonnie Lloyd**, an associate of the late, legendary ride designer **Wendell "Bud" Hurlbut**, and **Dave Helm** of

Helm & Sons Amusements in revamping the ride. Called the **Crystal Corral Carousel**, it now sports gold and silver horses and a thematically fitting hand-painted antique wood look.

Wolovich lauded his own crew, including his right-hand man, **Alan Morales**, builder **Herve Cuzor**, artists **Megan Kallevig** and **Lauren Markland**, and his wife, **Marisol Wolovich**, for helping him execute his vision for the project. Plans call for adding Western town facades around the carousel, a theater for puppet shows and an animatronic tree that tells stories of the California Gold Rush.

Wolovich said El Dorado Frontier is drawing support from Long Beach residents and others driving in from outside the city.

"It's small and quaint, and some kids think it's another section of Disneyland. But it's a much more affordable alternative. You can picnic, hold events here. It brings everything back to basics."

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It's an ol' new decade in Palm Springs

'80s-themed barcade
a welcome 'Glitch' in
city's midcentury rep

AT: Dean Lamanna
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PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — Its worldwide fame is rooted in its midcentury modern architecture and history as Hollywood's playground. Now, Palm Springs has made a surprising leap from the 1950s to the 1980s — at least in the amusement arena.

Officially opened last July, the retro barcade **Glitch**, located on N. Palm Canyon Drive just north of the city's hip Uptown District, stocks more than two dozen vintage arcade games: Centipede, Defender, Donkey Kong, Mortal Kombat II and Pac-Man, to name a few. Ping pong, Skee-Ball and several classic and newer pinball machines and games round out the recreational lineup.

The neon-accented throw-back scene has more to encourage patrons to kick back, stick around for a couple hours, and indulge in and reminisce about eighties pop culture. Along with craft cocktails, a zesty fast-casual menu and cozy vinyl booths, Glitch offers mini-theme rooms outfitted with bean bag chairs, lava lamps, and period books, comics and posters — in short, everything one might recall from an early-MTV-era basement rec room or teenager's bedroom.

Even the obligatory video

wall gets a retro twist, with shelves of old picture-tube TVs playing VHS videocassettes of 1980s movies like *When Harry Met Sally...* and *Top Gun*.

Entrepreneurs **Stephen Hansen** and his wife, **Liz Kao**, envisioned Glitch as a safe space for all to gather, play games, drink and eat.

"Nostalgia for the '80s and '90s has been simmering for a few years, but we didn't birth the concept because of its popularity," Hansen told *Amusement Today*. "We created Glitch because we know how powerful memories are, and how they can intertwine complete strangers."

The fun spot is partly riding a wave of renewed interest in Palm Springs not only from tourists, but from young urban professionals seeking both investment opportunities and an escape from California's coastal city rat race.

The town's largely retirement-age residential demographic did not concern Hansen.

"Who doesn't love a good pinball game?" he said. "Retirees come in and play our **Bally Fireball!** pinball machine. This is a place for everyone until 10 p.m., when it's 21 and up. It may feel 'adult' here, however, parents love to show kids their youth, and I believe there is a positive pivot point for everyone at Glitch. We have nights for all demographics — from DJs for young adults to happy

hour and Ms. Pac-Man for the older crowd."

Glitch's games, which are supplied, maintained and often switched out by **Vintage Arcade Superstore** of Glendale, California, accept quarters for play. In addition to burgers and fried-chicken sandwiches, the menu lists signature treats such as Street Fighter Fries (with a coconut sambal dipping sauce) and Kung-Fu Noodles (egg noodles with vegetables, shallots, garlic and house sauce, topped with a fried egg).

"Our chef, **Christian Sia**, works insanely hard at creating an amazing Asian-inspired menu," said Hansen. He also credits Liz for tapping her cultural heritage to bring Cambodian and Thai flavors to the mix.

Sporting a distinctively midcentury zigzag roofline, the 10,000-square-foot joint — available for event rental — also draws clientele from nearby businesses, including **Infusion Beach Club**, a boutique hotel in which Hansen has an ownership stake.

"The comradery between local businesses is superb, and the community is awesome at engaging with us through **Instagram** and **Facebook**," he said. "I firmly believe in the area's growth. So many great businesses are opening here over the next few months and years, and I look forward to Glitch continuing to be one of them."

• glitchpalmsprings.com



While it sports a midcentury modern exterior (upper left) befitting Palm Springs, Glitch is a repository of 1980s pop culture and arcade fun — complete with mini-theme rooms outfitted with bean bag chairs, bric-a-brac and video game consoles from the era.

AT/DEAN LAMANNA; COURTESY GLITCH PALM SPRINGS

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Beloved Kiddie Park enjoys a new life at San Antonio Zoo

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SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Last summer, management of **Kiddie Park** took a leap of faith. What was almost considered a city landmark, the location of the small children's park was being encroached upon (AT June 2019). Needing a solution, the nearby **San Antonio Zoo** stepped in with an answer.

Using a small piece of undeveloped land near the zoo's gate, the park was relocated to its new home.

"The biggest hurdle in moving Kiddie Park was landing on the exact location along the perimeter of the zoo," said **Tim Morrow**, CEO, San Antonio Zoo. "There was some angst that one of the options would have drawn more traffic into the park. We worked through that logistically and ultimately located Kiddie Park on the perimeter near the zoo front gate. It was important to us not to place Kiddie Park on the interior of the zoo where guests would have had to pay zoo admission to enjoy it. For nearly 100 years the park has had free admission, so we wanted to maintain that feel and accessibility for our community."

The previous location found parking spaces disappearing, which made it difficult for families arriving for booked birthday parties to find room for their vehicles. Where once only 30 spaces existed, Kiddie Park now has the benefit of a public park that also features a parking garage. With the existing lots, there are more than 1,200 spaces, eliminating any parking difficulties.

The property is enjoying record attendance at what is considered the off-season for Kiddie Park. From planning to opening, the project took about a year, although the park was closed for only a few months from midsummer to October.



The park's **Herschell Spillman** carousel dates back to 1918. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

"San Antonio Zoo sits in a park with history of human habitation dating back to pre-historic times, so the sight was monitored by archeologists," said Morrow. "We identified and marked where 18th-century acequia used to carry water from the headwaters of the San Antonio River (just north of the zoo) to downtown San Antonio. Kiddie Park itself is nearly 100 years old, so we knew great care had to be taken in order to make the move. The team of San Antonio Zoo crew, Kiddie Park team members and **Guido Construction** did an excellent job moving the park.

"Once at the location, the next challenge was re-installing. This was the first project I've been involved in where we tried to actually maintain the 'age and charm' of the attractions," said Morrow. "We did not want to make it look brand new. The nostalgic look of Kiddie Park is part of what people love about it. Many upgrades were made to the rides in regard to LED lighting, better control panels

and areas for operators."

With the new location came the opportunity to make the park more accessible. The old ground surface made it challenging for wheelchairs and strollers. A new central paved pathway makes accessibility convenient and inclusive.

"Being located next to the zoo makes it easy to visit for families that just want to ride the nostalgic rides," said Morrow. "Nearly 1.2 million people visit San Antonio Zoo each year, and a large majority of those visitors mirror the family demographic that visits Kiddie Park. We have seen a great increase in discreet ridership. At the old location it was more of a birthday party destination at its core."

The current plans are to continue to improve the guest experience. In 2019 Kiddie Park opened for the first time at night. Following regular operating hours during the day, Kiddie Park opened up into the zoo as part of the Zoo Lights experience. The schedule has

also increased operating days and extended hours to give guests more opportunities to enjoy the park.

All but one ride made the journey to the new location. Among its offerings are a 1918 hand-carved **Herschell Spillman** carousel and numerous vintage kiddie rides. Adults are permitted to ride with their children free of charge on three of the rides.

Inside the zoo is a large, 60-figure carousel. A train ride runs throughout Brackenridge Park, which makes a stop at Kiddie Park.

"During the relocation, our maintenance team test riding the UFO ride in their hard hats and vests was something to behold," Morrow told *Amusement Today*. "No doubt some of them rode this ride as children, and to see them with their hands raised, smiling and laughing while riding the ride in safety gear was a moment I'll never forget. It really spoke to the emotional connection people have with Kiddie Park."

Park personnel frequently comment on overhearing grandparents and parents talk about how they had their own birthday parties here many decades ago as they watch their children enjoy the exact same experience. The park opened at the original location in 1925.

"It's hard to explain to someone who wasn't raised in San Antonio the value this park has to the community and to the collective memories of the people of San Antonio and South Texas. It is truly an honor and a great responsibility to now be operating this park and hopefully creating more memories for the next 100 years of the children that visit," said Morrow. "Nothing much had changed at Kiddie Park over the last 100 years and that is part of the charm of it. Guests return to Kiddie Park as adults and the rides and experiences are still the same. They are able to share those exact same memories with their children, which in today's world is hard to find."



Kiddie Park's new location (left) at the San Antonio Zoo is much more accessible. Parents can ride with their children on three of the rides (middle). A rare electric bus ride (right) transports many happy children. AT/TIM BALDWIN; JEFFREY SEIFERT

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Zamperla adds new attractions, including a world's-first ride

Coney Island's reimagined Luna Park celebrates 10-year success

AT: Tim Baldwin

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BROOKLYN, N.Y. — In 2010, ride manufacturer **Zamperla** and its sister company, **Central Amusement International** (CAI), breathed new life into Coney Island. Various plans for the area had been proposed, many of which involved the rejection of Coney Island's historical identity. All that changed when **Luna Park** was brought to reimagined glory with numerous nods to the area's colorful past.

This year, the property is celebrating 10 years of success. The anniversary celebration arrives with several additions.

"Each season, our goal is to deliver the best experiences to our local community as well as the tourists who visit us each year," said **Alessandro Zamperla**, president, CAI. "Our park began as one relatively small location with 19 attractions in 2010. In 2020, with our latest attractions, new food and beverage locations, and our new spaces, we have a lot to celebrate, and we're inviting everyone to join in on the fun."

Even before approaching the four new attractions for 2020, visitors are sure to notice changes to the surroundings. Newly enhanced green spaces will offer shade, relaxing areas and performance opportunities.

"At CAI we do more than add rides to our parks; we work to enhance the entire park experience," said Zamperla. "That's why we



hired **Team Park Project** to design the expansion areas with the goal to include spaces to relax with art installations to further display the unique charisma and history of Coney Island and give guests an opportunity to enjoy the amazingly fun ambiance while visiting Luna Park."

Children and families, however, will be delighted with new ride offerings. Big WaveZ will be the first of its

Two trains on the new family roller coaster will be ADA accessible. COURTESY ZAMPERLA

kind. Termed an interactive water ride, Big WaveZ will make its worldwide debut at Luna Park. Passengers board a tower ride, rise to the top where they interact with a video screen and then plunge to create a big splash. A Zamperla company product, the ride has been in development and testing for a year.

"Think of it as a vertical shoot-the-chute," said **Michael Coleman**, North American sales, Zamperla. "Riders get wet, but spectators do, too, in a splash zone."

Two of the new attractions are intertwined. A Junior Coaster and Super Flume, both produced by Zamperla, will reside on the same space, twisting and curving around each other.

Riders on the Super Flume, which will operate with up to 12 boats seating six passengers, will have a momentary panoramic view of the shoreline before the plunge finale. The family coaster features many curves as the track weaves through the flume ride. It will be equipped with two trains, both of which will feature ADA access.

"The marriage of these two dissimilar attractions heightens the riders' sense of anticipation, amplifies the guests' perspectives and incites curiosity," Zamperla told *Amusement Today*. "After riding one of the two interlaced attractions, our guests will be excited to ride the other."

The new coaster will be the seventh at Luna Park, includ-

cities in the world, with some of the most demanding consumers," said Zamperla. "The relationship between CAI and Zamperla is definitely a synergistic and symbiotic one that makes both stronger."

Even more is being added for the 10th anniversary. Sporting a circus theme, a Ropes Course Adventure Zone supplied by **RCI** will offer four levels of physical, interactive entertainment as kids navigate the attraction, which offers various skill levels. Located next to the Thunderbolt roller coaster, the structure will also feature ziplines.

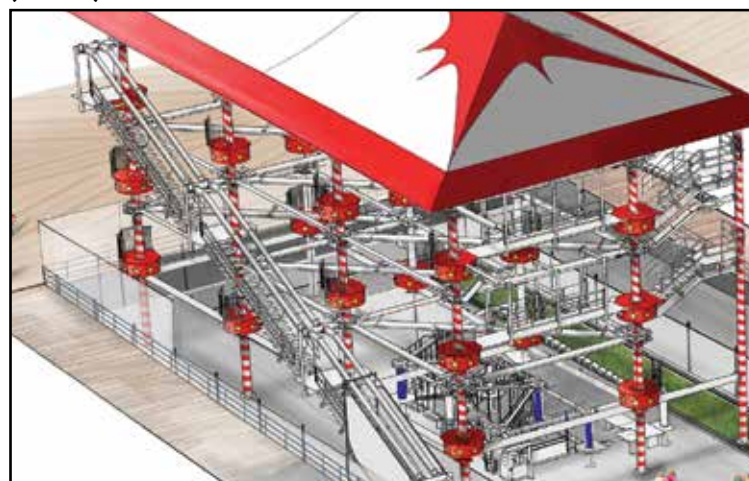
"We are excited to grow, provide quality entertainment and bring the finest in amusement park innovations to New York City," said Zamperla. "Leading the redevelopment project of the Coney Island amusement district was a difficult endeavor to take on, however it has been an increasingly rewarding one. We continue to restore the legacy of Coney Island by bringing new and exhilarating attractions and entertainment to our guests."

Luna Park opens for its anniversary season on April 4.

•lunaparknyc.com



Intertwined with the coaster will be a Super Flume (above) which will offer scenic views of the beach. An interactive adventure course supplied by RCI will sport a circus theme (below). COURTESY ZAMPERLA



Big WaveZ, a combination tower and water ride, will make its world debut in 2020. COURTESY ZAMPERLA

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Extreme Engineering brings Cloud Coaster to Vietnam

ATHENS, Texas — **Extreme Engineering** is currently installing Asia's first-ever Cloud Coaster at **Vinpearl Land** in Phu Quoc, Vietnam.

Vinpearl's Cloud Coaster project includes a jungle theme around the track, giving riders the experience of flight above the park. The family coaster is purposely designed to be a glider experience, giving kids a fun, smooth experience above the grounds with views of iconic landmarks within the park along the coaster's nearly roughly 400-foot-long track. The coaster was required to include custom finishes and paint coatings in order to withstand the aggressive weather in southeast Asia.

"The Cloud Coaster was designed to allow post install anchoring, eliminating heavy duty construction costs that you would typically experience on other attractions," said **Phil Wilson**, Extreme Engineering's executive vice president. "We were able to find a way to fit the coaster in a very tight space, minimizing the impact on required real estate from the park."

The Vinpearl Land Cloud Coaster's ride vehicle was unveiled during IAAPA Expo 2019 in Orlando.

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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Officials of **Capilano Suspension Bridge Park** in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, announced in late February they have chosen **Gateway Ticketing Systems** and its Galaxy Ticketing and Admission Control software to provide a seamless purchase and admission experience for their guests.

The park is a former Gateway Ticketing Systems customer, but hasn't used Galaxy since 2005. Officials there were looking for a new ticketing system that provided cohesive solutions for their business needs and had API capabilities.

The Galaxy software solution will provide Capilano Suspension Bridge with ticketing, admission control, membership, group sales, order entry, resource capacity management, stored value and upsell functionality, and a web store to handle these functions online. They also will utilize Reporting Plus, which will capture all the transactional data from their point-of-sale, membership and admission control and create a suite of reports accessible on their desktops or mobile devices to help them make data-driven business decisions.

Capilano Suspension Bridge, originally built in 1889, stretches 450 feet across and 230 feet above the Capilano River and now welcomes more than a million visitors every year. Cliffwalk is the park's newest attraction. It is a cantilevered walkway clinging to the granite cliff high above Capilano Canyon.

The 27-acre park also includes Treetops Adventure, seven suspension bridges through the evergreens which takes guests up to 110 feet above the forest floor. Guided nature tours, the Kids' Rainforest Explorer Program and the Living Forest Exhibit enhance this rainforest encounter.

Buffalo's Explore and More Children's Museum, Buffalo, New York, is getting ready to open up a brand new exhibit, called the Treehouse.

The new Treehouse exhibit is an indoor play area designed to be accessible to all. It is sponsored by Buffalo-based Person Centered Services, which provides care coordination for people with disabilities.

The inclusive playground, designed by **Buffalo Treehouse, LLC**, is meant to promote physical, cognitive, visual and hearing opportunities for all children.

Magic Memories has continued to increase both revenue and guest participation at **Ruby Falls** through continual investment into technology and product innovation.

Located in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Ruby Falls is home to the tallest and deepest underground waterfall open to the public in the U.S. By partnering with Magic Memories, Ruby Falls offers guests a video product — something that guests are unable to capture themselves during their visit.

The new video product places guests right

into the attraction's light show, positioned in front of the thundering waterfall located 1,120 feet beneath the summit of **Lookout Mountain**.

Ruby Falls Senior Director of Operations and Strategic Development, **Kara Van Brunt** stated: "Magic Memories' expanded multimedia options deliver exciting guest benefits, including the ability for guests to instantly access their personalized digital media content, making it easy to share in real-time on social media. Quick accessibility and the new individualized video are a great bonus for our guests."

Officials at **Gatorland** in Orlando, Florida, have found great success in the park's "Trainer for a Day" program in both entertainment for guests as well as educational for those guests who have little to no knowledge of the large reptiles.

The program is geared toward giving the participant a glimpse into what it takes to be able to work with and around the alligators. Guests are given an abundance of information and are able to even participate in feeding alligators.

Gatorland, a 110-acre theme park and wildlife preserve, wrapped up its 70th anniversary in 2019. It is known as a sort of throwback to Old Florida, with a focus on nature and low-tech. In addition to the gators, there are tortoises, snakes, emus, wood storks, Florida white-tailed deer (tiny by comparison to Northern deer), and Florida panthers.

There is also a swamp buggy tour and a zip line. The Gatorland Express, a vintage open-air train, makes a circuit of the property with a soundtrack describing the sights.

Jumparoo, the ever-popular and oldest show, is also still entertaining visitors. The show involves two feeders competing to see who can get an alligator to jump higher for a piece of raw meat they dangle from the dock. The alligators are trained to respond to both music and applause.

Snow was still on the ground in February, when officials at **Canada's Wonderland**, Vaughn, Ontario, announced the park's official 2020 opening date, which will be May 1.

At about the same time, the park posted available job positions for seasonal employment. Plans are to hire more than 4,000 part-time and full-time employees for the 2020 season. The available jobs cover a broad range of areas. Some of those include lifeguards, cooks, actors, admission associates, singers and paramedics.

The **Florida Aquarium**, Tampa, Florida, is kicking off the year with major plans to install new exhibits and experiences for guests as part of a \$14 million investment.

Additional experiences, upgraded areas and new additions announced are in the plans. Already open is the CIBC Aquatic Lounge Gallery, which will house new animals to the aquarium. It is a part of a reception hall for corporate and private events and is adjacent to the event space in **Mosaic Center**.

The lounge is being created through a multi-year partnership with **CIBA Bank USA**.

Another new exhibit, set to open this spring, is being called Washed Ashore, Art to Save the Sea. It will feature sculptures made from littered plastic debris collected from beaches.

A temporary butterfly garden is planned. It will be a free garden space fronting the venue's entrance. It is expected to open March 2021.

Enhancements to the wetland trail exhibit are expected to be completed by this summer, and the **TECO** rooftop pavilion and solar exhibit with more than 1,100 panels is expected to open next fall.

Los Angeles digs deep to improve paleontological attraction

*World-renowned
La Brea Tar Pits see
multiyear makeover*

AT: Dean Lamanna
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LOS ANGELES — As famous for the uniqueness of their mid-city setting as for their appearances in documentaries and feature films, the **La Brea Tar Pits** — reservoirs of seeping natural asphalt said to hold the most complete record of life during the Ice Age — are a living laboratory for scientists researching the remains of plants and animals trapped in them as far back as 50,000 years.

While excavators continue to mine the pits carefully for fossils, which the staff of the adjacent, 1977-opened **George C. Page Museum** cleans and preserves behind visitor obser-

vation windows, the 13-acre campus is beginning to undergo a multiyear, multimillion-dollar renovation. The **Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County** (NHMLAC), overseer of the site and its activities, has selected the award-winning, New York-based architectural design firm **Weiss / Manfredi** — known for Seattle's **Olympic Sculpture Park**, among other high-profile urban projects — to lead the master-planning team.

NHMLAC invited public feedback on various design proposals it solicited, receiving more than 2,100 survey responses reflecting local citizens' appreciation for the cultural resource. To assist with its selection, NHMLAC assembled a jury of experts from the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, design, science, natural history and the arts.

Weiss / Manfredi's win-



Renovation plans for the La Brea Tar Pits attraction, including the George C. Page Museum fossil repository and research facility, call for a triple-Möbius-strip-shaped walkway and bridge connecting the 13-acre site's various features.
COURTESY WEISS/MANFREDI AND LA BREA TAR PITS

ning concept for the renovation, titled "Loops and Lenses," aims to create "new connections between the museum and [its surrounding] park, between science and culture, and envisions the entire site as an unfolding place of discovery," per a statement from the firm.



Plans call for the construction of a triple-Möbius-strip-shaped walkway weaving elegantly through the acreage, more attractive showcasing of the excavation areas and a curving pedestrian span over the water-covered, methane-bubbling Lake Pit. The museum will get a new

wing containing exhibition space and labs as well as expanded outdoor space allowing for performances and a new café. Play areas for kids, including a sand pit, a treehouse and a rope climbing net, will dot the walkway.

"There's no site in Los Angeles, and really no site in the world, quite like this," said project jury member **Christopher Hawthorne**, chief design officer for the City of Los Angeles. "It's a place of deep emotional connection and nostalgia for Angelenos, a community gathering place and a green space in the middle of the dense Miracle Mile [section of the city], and a world-class location for research, discovery and exhibition."

Since 1913, the La Brea Tar Pits have yielded millions of fossils, including the skeletons of saber-toothed cats, dire wolves, mammoths and mastodons.

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The Franklin Institute explores the art — and fun — of preparedness

AT: Dean Lamanna
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PHILADELPHIA — Strategies for survival and escape are being showcased in a world-premiere experiential exhibit for all ages at **The Franklin Institute** science museum.

"The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Experience," based on the internationally best-selling survival handbook series first published in 1999 by **Chronicle Books**, presents a series of immersive challenges with essential tips for surviving unexpected but possible real-life situations. The edutainment attraction, produced by **Exhibits Development Group** of Saint Paul, Minnesota, opened last fall and runs through April 19 before it travels nationally.

A hands-on, "minds-on" experience, it offers skills-developing practical situational exercises in a Survival Gymnasium, which has been erected inside the museum's Mandell Center. Visitors can learn how to jump between moving train cars, pick a lock, escape from a swarm of killer bees, survive an avalanche and more among the 13 challenges that fill the space.

"Ingenuity, creative thinking and multi-step problem-solving are not only crucial for the next-generation workforce but for everyone, and this is an exhibit that helps develop those skills in an immensely interactive and engaging way," said **Larry Dubinski**, president and CEO of The Franklin Institute. He noted that "millions of readers over the past two decades have been exposed to the wit and wisdom" of *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook* series.

Real-world survival stories — such as lion and shark attacks — are featured in superhero-themed graphics,



"The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Experience" offers educational, skills-building challenges that include climbing on narrow ledges, spinning a wheel to learn how to deal with animal attacks, surviving a simulated avalanche (ball pit) and jumping between moving train cars (padded platforms, above). COURTESY THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

artifacts and photos that line the exhibit's Hall of Fame. The gallery also celebrates the heroes who encounter worst-case scenarios daily, including wildlife rescue workers, firefighters and emergency first-responders.

Last spring, co-authors **David Borgenicht** and **Joshua Piven** relaunched a revised edition of the original handbook through their **Quirk Books** imprint with 20 all-new scenarios for 21st century threats (e.g., cyberbullying, extreme weather, "fake news"), plus updated advice from dozens of experts.

"Josh and I always dreamed of turning *Worst-Case Scenario* into an interactive experience," said



Borgenicht, "and we couldn't be more excited about partnering with The Franklin Institute to make this come to life."

Added Piven: "We're fortunate to have an amazingly talented team that's created not just an exhibit, but a first-of-its-kind experience that's going to amaze and educate museum visitors."

•fi.edu

The London Resort releases new plans, concept renderings

535-acre destination's initial phase will have six themed lands

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SWANSCOMBE, KENT, U.K. — **The London Resort**, a long-delayed themed destination proposed for 535 acres on the River Thames just outside London, recently revealed new details and conceptual artwork for the six lands that will highlight its planned first phase on the Swanscombe Peninsula.

Boasting new and reupped partnerships with the **BBC**, **ITV Studios** and **Paramount Pictures**, the £3 billion (\$3.75 billion) project has new backing from the **Kuwaiti European Holding Group**. Eventually, it will be a two-park resort with 3,500 hotel rooms (**Radisson Hotel Group** is a signatory), with the first park tentatively set to open on 220 acres in 2024 and the second within five years.

"We are creating a first-class theme park — a destination that maximizes all the new, immersive and interactive technologies and experiences in the world," said **Pierre-Yves Gerbeau**, CEO of **London Resort Co. Holdings** and a former operations vice president for **Disneyland Paris**, who joined the project last July. "But we won't



The London Resort is eyeing 2024 for the opening of its first gate. The theme park will have six lands featuring IP-inspired rides, and approximately 70 percent of the attractions will be shielded from the weather. COURTESY THE LONDON RESORT

just be creating a world-class leisure destination. It will also be one of the most sustainable theme parks on the planet."

Gerbeau emphasized that the overall project and its individual attractions are being approached under three precepts: innovation, relevance and flexibility. The resort's ability to evolve and adapt easily, he noted, will be key to its success.

"We're not here to copy what's been done before, even if it has been successful," Gerbeau said. "We need to consider that the customers of today will not be the customers of 2024."

A rundown of what the resort's first six lands will offer reveals plenty of tried-and-true theme park features, nonetheless.

The entrance to the property will be via a grand plaza that

leads to High Street, lined with shops, restaurants, hotels, a convention center and more. From here, guests can start their land explorations with The Studios — a backlot-style district where the attractions are action movie-themed, including car chases and other high-thrill-factor stunts.

Just to the north lies The Woods, an enchanted realm where, as the resort's website describes, "the boundary between reality and fantasy dissolves." The area promises to put a fresh spin on beloved bedtime stories, fables and fairy tales.

From The Woods, the journey continues into The Kingdom, an immersive realm of swords, sorcery and dragons. It presents an England of yore — an ancient land with imposing castles and mystical Arthurian legends.

Farther north are The Isles, inhabited by giant creatures and mythical beasts. Highlights of this land include fantastic architecture and rides incorporating cutting-edge technology. The Jungle, just south of The Isles, contains the ancient, overgrown ruins of a Mesoamerican civilization, where secrets and mysterious artifacts await discovery.

The final land, Starport, is a bustling 23rd century landing zone dedicated to futuristic experiences, alien encounters and large thrill rides built around sci-fi adventures.

The completed resort is expected to employ an estimated 30,000 people and, as evidenced by its partnerships, will rely heavily on IP for its ride and show concepts. About 70 percent of the attractions will be

indoors or otherwise shielded from inclement weather.

Wildlife habitat creation and areas of environmental enhancement along the River Thames are included in the resort plans, for which final governmental approvals are pending.

A partnership with **EDF Energy** aims to make The London Resort the world's most sustainable theme park destination through the use of solar panels and other renewable technologies — with a net-zero emissions goal.

"We are exploring new and innovative ways of making the resort as sustainable and environmentally responsible as possible," Gerbeau said. "This is a top priority for us, as it will be for our visitors long into the future."

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ETF Ride Systems and Jora Vision presented the Pirate Mania mini-dark ride for FECs at the Saudi Entertainment and Amusement Trade Show. COURTESY ETF RIDE SYSTEMS

ETF and Jora Vision unveil FEC mini-dark ride design

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — During February's first-ever **Saudi Entertainment and Amusement Trade Show**, ETF Ride Systems and Jora Vision unveiled a new product specifically with family entertainment centers in mind. Described as a mini-dark ride, Pirate Mania was developed for indoor venues with a limited footprint and adds an interactive and highly-repeatable family experience.

Pirate Mania is the first interactive dark ride developed especially for the FEC market or smaller parks and events. The turnkey attraction requires less than 2,700 square feet and will be supplied by ETF Ride Systems. Jora Vision designed the rides immersive themeing.

"For Pirate Mania, we are using the Mystic Mover system, which is the smart, smaller member of the ETF trackless family," explained **Ruud Koppens**, CEO of ETF Ride Systems. "[The vehicle] follows a mounted wire in the floor and has a double bench and a capacity of four guests."

The ride features unique, animated targets and its path includes 90-degree turns and a 360-degree, on-the-spot rotation. The ride system also integrates an on-board sound system.

"We hope to convince FECs that such dark rides are a great investment to diversify their entertainment offer," said **Jan Maarten de Raad**, CEO of Jora Vision.

•joravision.com
•etf.nl

Urban Air Adventure Parks, Creative Works partner on unique laser tag concept



KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Creative Works installed a new open air laser tag concept for Urban Air Adventure Park in Knoxville, Tennessee, as part of a continued relationship with the adventure park franchise. The concept breaks open the traditional "closed box" arena design by featuring half-walls at the entrance of the arena, creating an open and engaging layout. This design draws attention to the laser tag arena and allows other guests in the facility to watch the gameplay from the outside. The design helps bring over new players who otherwise might not have played and aids in creating urgency for guests once they see others having fun playing the attraction. COURTESY CREATIVE WORKS



VR ROUNDUP

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The second annual **Aurea Awards**, honoring the world's best innovations in virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), were presented by mixed reality (XR) lab **MackNext** during an international conference at **Europa-Park** in Rust, Germany, Jan. 16. Selected by digital entertainment industry leaders from 10 finalists whittled down from 120 submissions, four winning products and projects represented the categories of Experience, Influence, Innovation and Interaction.

For the Experience honor, the experts chose **iHoloxide**, which makes every car trip a unique gaming experience for passengers using VR headsets with software that reacts to the movements of the vehicle. The Influence award went to *The 1944 Paris Insurrection*, which enables participants to immerse themselves in the era of the French capital's liberation, strolling through the city's catacombs. The startup studio **Volucap** took the Innovation honor for its system utilizing volumetric human digital capture technology, while **Hologate** picked up the Interaction honor for Hologate Blitz, a multiplayer motion simulator.

Boston-based startup **Metro VR Studios**, an independent VR video game development company, aims to deliver next-generation VR action and adventure games that are fully immersive and told through compelling storylines. With the release in February of its first game, *Orion13*, players can experience open-world locomotion and realistically articulated virtual body features that give the participant a fluid, fast-paced, first-person VR experience — all set to an original soundtrack. With stylized settings reminiscent of the classic sci-fi film *Bladerunner*, the game, part of a planned trilogy, unfolds in a robot-ruled world where buildings and landscapes are saturated in neon colors. The company has two other games in development: *Quest of the Pirate King* and *Kid Air Combat*.

VR World opened a new XR location in the heart of New York City in late January. The three-floor, 12,000-square-foot venue, which emerged from the success of the company's first, 2017-opened Manhattan location, invites urban explorers and traveling visitors to discover dozens of immersive art, music, film and XR gaming activations — all under one roof. Located at 8 E. 34th St., the facility promotes a more social and nightlife-driven atmosphere, offering a combination of club events, a full bar serving specialty cocktails, interactive media installations and VR / AR fun. VR World showcases a wide range of immersive experiences, including an escape from Egyptian pyramid, surviving a zombie apocalypse, exploring the Orion Nebula and challenging friends on a racetrack. The location is designed as a template for expansion to other major markets over the next year.

Irvine, California-based **Esportz Entertainment Corp.**, home of **Esportz Network**, one of the largest global esports news organizations, has announced an agreement with **Pfnix, LLC**, to create an 18,000-square-foot studio in Orange, California, in what the company describes as a major commitment to develop dedicated esports programming. The state-of-the-art facility will feature **Zero Density** AR / VR filming capabilities and a massive, 50-by-50-by-24-foot tall cyclorama wall for filming any kind

of production. The expanded programming of Esportz Network, presented by a lineup of on-air talent, will include global esports event coverage, industry insiders' top stories, reality shows, and talk shows featuring interviews with gamers, creators, investors and industry executives.

Spree Interactive, maker of the affordable, scalable, free-roam **Holodek VR** location-based experiences, has introduced a turnkey VR bumper car solution that it developed collaboratively with **VR Coaster GmbH & Co. KG** and **I.E. Park**, which supplies amusement rides, roller coasters and bumper cars for parks worldwide. The innovation combines Spree's patented multiplayer VR with VR Coaster's high-end gaming content and durable hardware and is designed for installation on I.E. Park's bumper car attractions.

In other Spree news, the Nürnberg, Germany-based company has teamed with award-winning Hollywood visual effects company **Pixomondo** (**HBO's Game of Thrones**) on *Mission to Mars*, a location-based, interactive VR adventure for groups of up to 20 players that investigates humanity's possible survival on Mars. Players are divided into small teams and assigned different tasks to get to know the dangers and virtues of the red planet while gathering information and cooperating with their team members.

Prague-headquartered **VRgineers**, developers of XTAL, one of the industry's most advanced professional VR headsets, unveiled a new generation of the equipment at the **Consumer Electronics Show** in Las Vegas in early January that may cause ripples throughout the industry. Already in use with the **U.S. Department of Defense**, major national aircraft simulators and leading global automobile manufacturers, the latest version of the XTAL headset incorporates industry-best 8K resolution and a set of new features — including readability optimized for the world's most powerful GPUs (such as the Quadro RTX 8000 from **NVIDIA**) and **BizLink VirtualLink** cable implementation. Instead of utilizing as many as six cables, VirtualLink enabling requires only a single cable to connect VR systems.

Hyperdeck, an immersive, multiplayer VR experience from **MajorMega** of Lititz, Pennsylvania, will be among the attractions found at the new 23-acre Hershey's Chocolate town at **Hersheypark** this summer. Two unique, 300-square-foot Hyperdecks will create a virtual world featuring a full-motion floor and multisensory effects, such as wind, heat and earth-rattling movement. The game will continue beyond the immediate attraction as spectators help or challenge players via tablets stationed outside.

In a report released in late 2019, Portland, Oregon-based **Allied Market Research** observed that demand for head-mounted display equipment in the gaming and entertainment sector and the availability of more reasonably priced VR devices are the major factors fueling the growth of the global VR content creation market. The company's data, compiled across categories including content type, component and end use, led it to estimate that the market was \$431.3 million in 2018 and forecast that it will hit \$46.54 billion by 2026 — registering a compound annual growth rate of 77.1% during the period.

'DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy' explores VR's heights

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LOS ANGELES — **Dreamscape**, a location-based immersive virtual reality (VR) entertainment company backed by some of Hollywood's top film and entertainment creatives, launched a free-flying interactive VR experience at its flagship **Westfield Century City** mall location in mid-December.

Titled *DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy*, the new experience is a collaboration between **Dreamscape**, **DreamWorks Animation, LLC**, and **Universal Games and Digital Platforms**. It was inspired by the critically and commercially successful *How to Train Your Dragon* animated film trilogy.

The attraction enlists up to eight riders at a time in a flight academy led by famed dragon riders Hiccup and Astrid and their loyal dragons, Toothless and Stormfly. The adventure kicks off at Berk, a village featured in the films that teeters high on the clifftops of a rugged North Sea island — home to fierce Vikings and every known



DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy, a multisensory VR experience debuted in December at Dreamscape in Los Angeles. COURTESY DREAMWORKS ANIMATION, LLC/DREAMSCAPE

species of dragon. In Berk, dragons and Vikings live in playful harmony, but poachers pose a constant threat, and this conflict engages participants in a swooping, swerving, rescue mission to the Hidden World.

Walter Parkes, chairman of Dreamscape and producer of *DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy*, described the seated, 4D-style experience — it incorporates wind and vibrations, as well as “sea spray” — as one that both extends the film trilogy's storyline and makes participants the stars of their own movie adventure.

“At Dreamscape, our goal is to create immersive experiences that allow our customers to enter into, and in this case fly into, worlds that they never dreamed possible,” Parkes said. “No longer are audiences just watching Hiccup and Toothless take on a group of ruthless poachers, but now they can fly alongside them on their very own dragons as they protect the Isle of Berk.”

“We are excited to introduce audiences to this unprecedented full sensory experience of becoming a dragon rider.”

The perilous rescue within the Hidden World is, indeed, filled with dramatic action that finds participants dodging flaming arrows and rushing through collapsing ice caverns. In order to earn their dragon wings and become true heroes, participants must escape as a team unscathed.

“*Dragons Flight Academy* brings together the film trilogy's best-in-class storytelling and memorable characters with a unique interactive experience that will leave a lasting impression with new and existing fans alike,” said **Christina Lee Storm** of DreamWorks Animation. “It brings guests to new heights in a fun, wondrous way that will inspire repeat visits.”

Dreamscape has been operating a VR venue in Los Angeles since late 2018. The company recently opened locations in Dallas and Dubai, and it plans to introduce its VR venues in key markets, including Columbus, Ohio, and the New York / New Jersey metro area, this year.

Advance tickets for *DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy* can be purchased at Dreamscape's website.

• dreamscapeimmersive.com



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FEC suppliers and innovations on display during IAAPA Expo 2019 in Orlando



Lori Larsen, left, and Marissa Kiella, with RCI Adventure Trail, said the company is experiencing growth, particularly in the international market. At last November's IAAPA Expo 2019, Larsen reported that RCI had 450 installations worldwide with 60% of them indoors and 40% outdoors. Formerly known as Ropes Courses, Inc., RCI Adventure Trail showcased a fully constructed Sky Trail aerial attraction consisting of a few new elements along with an innovative multi-activity Clip 'n Climb configuration.



Tami Dean, Ride Development Company, is enjoying the growth of the family entertainment center industry. Her bumper cars can be installed indoors and/or outdoors. The company makes electric floor cars and battery and gasoline bumper car systems. Seen here in the background on a bumper car is Ride Development Company's Robert Sifluenteo.



Inflatable Depot showed off a children's play area during the IAAPA Expo 2019 in November. The company has a fully customized system.



Michael Bridgman (far left) is a co-founder of Major Mega, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a virtual reality company. Seen here is the new Head Rush version of the company's Hyperdeck VR system. Business has been good for the company. Bridgman said the new Head Rush had only been out for about three months after a month-long trial at Hersheypark, Hershey, Pennsylvania. The floor model was sold to Andretti Indoor Karting and Games during the second day of the show.



Chad Baehr, Kids Attractions, made this game based on the Operation board game that was originally produced by Milton Bradley but now is made by Hasbro. Baehr has found games such as these are perfect for FECs and other types of party centers. His games are distributed by HEC Worldwide.



This Whopper Water game was on display last November at the IAAPA show. It is Bob Space Racer's first attendant-free game. The company's Larry Steele said with the explosion of family entertainment centers over the last couple of years, Bob Space Racers was giving more attention to these types of game.



Brent Dyer, Global Entertainment Management, was excited at the 2019 IAAPA Expo as attendees took a big interest in the company's Cutting Edge ax throwing products. Dyer said ax throwing is hugely popular right now in a variety of locations, including FECs that cater to older adults. The company's first year to exhibit at the IAAPA Expo was in 2018. The extent of growth within that one year has been phenomenal.



Eric Schoolmaster of the family-owned Adventure Golf Services, said the company's new modular miniature golf courses look and feel like concrete courses, but are made of interlocking flexible panels that can be installed indoors, outdoors and even places like cruise ships.

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CEC Entertainment, Inc., announced that **David McKillips**, president of international development for **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.**, will replace **Tom Leverton** as CEO. McKillips will run CEC's **Chuck E. Cheese** and **Peter Piper Pizza** brands.

The company said Leverton resigned after five years in the top job, but it didn't give a reason. Leverton became CEO in 2014 after private equity firm **Apollo Management** bought the chain and took it private. Leverton, who was CEO of **TopGolf** before joining CEC, led a turnaround at the chain. CEC posted same-venue sales gains for five straight quarters until November, when sales fell 0.9%.

McKillips, 48, arrives with 25 years of experience in the family entertainment, media and theme park industries. At Six Flags, he managed the theme park operator's international properties and led the company's food and beverage, retail, games and procurement functions in the U.S. Before joining Six Flags, he held management roles at **DC Comics**, **Sea World Entertainment** and **Sesame Place**.

A new **Urban Air Adventure Park** entertainment center opened in late January in Manchester, Connecticut. The new 52,000-square-foot center repurposed a former **Bob's Store** building and features a ropes course, rock climbing walls, trampolines, laser tag and a virtual reality hub.

This is just the second Urban Air Adventure Park franchise in Connecticut.

"It's hard to be in Connecticut and not be in Manchester. It's such a retail hub for this area, and it draws from the whole eastern part of the state," said **Veena Choudary**, who owns both the Manchester and Orange locations.

Main Event officially opened its 43rd family entertainment center in the country Sunday, Jan. 26, in Grand Prairie, Texas.



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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The 50,000-square-foot venue includes bowling lanes, video games, virtual reality experiences, gravity ropes and a double-decker laser tag arena, as well as a full kitchen and bar.

To promote the opening, Main Event offered to give away \$100,000 if a perfect game was bowled at its new center in Grand Prairie during the grand opening.

"Dallas-Fort Worth is our home, it's where the idea of Main Event originated, so it seemed more than appropriate for us to pull out all the stops in opening our seventh location in the area," said **Sarah Beddoe**, Chief Brand Officer, Main Event.

Embed has been part of the success of the new **Winter Wonderland** in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Sela Sports opened the 50-acre attraction last October.

Winter Wonderland celebrates the Riyadh Season Festival with 42 games, events and light shows, and also boasts the largest skating rink in the Middle East. With Embed's 250 Smart Touch card readers, visitors can enjoy a seamless guest experience at the venue without having to use cash or tokens.

The Winter Wonderland team also gains real-time visibility and control of the entire operation.

"We are extremely excited with the recent opening of the amazing Winter Wonderland in Riyadh, it is our privilege to be the chosen partner of Sela Sports for this momentous project, as well as being part of the remarkable growth of the entertainment and leisure industry in KSA," said **Rosa Tahmaseb**, Embed's managing director. "The smooth and successful implementation of Embed integrated solutions at Winter Wonderland is fundamentally due to the great collaboration we have with the SELA Sports team, and we look forward to many years of fuelling fun to their venue."

ward to many years of fuelling fun to their venue."

The climbing wall franchise **Clip 'n Climb** has announced plans to open 100 new sites across the U.K.

It will license its brand to independents and entrepreneurs as part of its latest expansion program. The sites will have a branded cafe, party rooms and additional soft play areas.

Having operated climbing sites in the U.K. since 2011, the company is part of **Entre-Prises U.K.**, a subsidiary of the **ABEO Group**. The brand presently has over 80 centers across the U.K., making more than \$32-million cumulative turnover per year.

"We've seen leisure climbing grow in popularity since we installed the first Clip 'n Climb center in the U.K. and industry insights report a 40-50% increase of indoor climbers in the last two years alone," said **Vicky Coupe**, Clip 'n Climb franchise manager. "With the news that sport climbing will make its Olympic debut at the Games in Japan 2020, its popularity is set to soar."

An eight-year employee of **ALLPLaY Family Entertainment** is the new owner of the candlepin bowling alley in Waldoboro, Maine, and has renamed it **Sammi's Family Entertainment Center**.

Sammi Spear, who grew up in the area, signed papers to take over the business Dec. 31, 2019. The business then closed for renovations, but reopened at the end of January.

"[We took] some time to add a fresh coat of paint and then [were] back to business," Spear said. Other changes include an updated computer system.

Spear started working at ALLPLaY in 2011. She had come to the bowling alley as a customer before that.

"I came in and started bowling in a league and **Don and Kelly (Benson)** asked if I wanted to work here on a regular basis and nine years later, here we are," Spear said.

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Bob's Space Racers celebrates 50 years of midway mania

AT: Tim Baldwin
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HOLLY HILL, Fla. — Less than six miles from **Daytona International Speedway** resides a company that not only has stood the test of time but has helped define what its very business is. So much so that the small city of Holly Hill renamed a street in the company's honor: Whac-A-Mole Way.

Fifty years ago, **Bob Cassata** was not interested in starting a business. His friends will tell you that Cassata always had an entrepreneurial head on his shoulders, but what would define his life was the result of something that sounded fun.

A simple homemade game that debuted in 1970 would be the birth of one of the biggest success stories of family entertainment. **Bob's Space Racers** today is a "household" name within the amusement industry, and it now celebrates its 50th anniversary.

"We are currently in over 120 countries," said **Larry Steele**, sales and project manager.

"The family is changing," said **Jack Cook**, president, responding to a question from *Amusement Today* regarding the growth of the FEC market. "Where families used to spend a whole day at an amusement park, the generation now has changed. Sometimes they don't want to be in the hot sun all day. Now real estate is becoming readily available and there is very little that can fill these locations. Now the family can go for three or four hours, parents can relax, kids can play games, everyone can bowl — and the family [outing] is accomplished in a few hours."



That changing dynamic certainly wasn't in place 50 years ago. The times then allowed two young friends to develop something that pushed the gaming market in a new direction, and things never remained the same.

The beginning

Jack Mendes became friends with Cassata when both were young. Cassata was a carpenter in Daytona Beach, and Mendes happened to be dating his niece. "Bob was one of these guys who was constantly innovating," said Mendes. Finding angles to garner a little extra cash, whether snack machines at a work site or selling snacks to incoming race traffic to Daytona, Cassata had a head for business.

As fate intervened, a friend of Cassata asked him to help out with work at the **Daytona Beach Boardwalk**, to which he immediately took a shine. He soon took up space for himself, working as a carpenter during the day and on the boardwalk at nights.

"At some point, someone asked Bob if he would be interested in working a fair," recalled Mendes. "Bob really liked that, but the [weather] conditions were not for him, and he figured there was a better way than just a canvas tent." Enter a burned-out trailer.



The space theme of Cassata's first game would spark the name for his company.
COURTESY BOB'S SPACE RACERS

Once this trailer was refurbished with floorboards and carpeting, colorful awnings and lighting, the 20-foot trailer became home to multiple games that could be stored within, and Cassata could operate two at a time and change them at a moment's notice. The fair business continued to grow.

Having become friends, Mendes eventually used his theater lighting expertise to help Cassata improve light and sound in his ventures. The two worked fairs together while Mendes was still in his high school days. There were no future plans, but Cassata's influence convinced Mendes that the two head out on the circuit again to make some money.

During that time, Cassata was developing an idea where players would be pitted against each other instead of playing against "the house."

"With a typical game,

you are always in competition with your customers," said Mendes. "With a race game, you are just conducting a race and there is a winner every time."

With a Daytona environment, this unheard-of concept could be a good fit. Mendes' technical background helped bring Cassata's idea to life during spring break of 1970. With its proximity to Cape Canaveral — not to mention three seasons of *Star Trek* — "everything was space around here," said Mendes. The game included Apollo 13 rockets rising up the outer space-themed background board. Bob's Space Race Game was born. At the time neither of them had intentions of ever selling the game.

The demand

The game proved popular, both at home and on the fair circuit. A family business saw his game and asked where

he got it. Once Cassata told him it was hand built, they inquired if he would build one for them. Seeing that as further competition, it was a fast "no." The vendor didn't accept that as an answer and was persistent with requests. In an effort to get rid of the constant calls, Cassata intended to deal with it once and for all by asking for a very expensive price. The vendor was willing to pay it. In fact, the offers continued, and they sold five more the next year without any advertisement.

1972 brought Bob's Space Racers first water shooting game. A new customer requested something specific, a water game. It had a similar space theme, but Lunar Lander moved the spacecraft from the top to the bottom. **Ed Carroll** of **Riverside Park** wanted a park model instead of a trailer situation, which

► See RACERS, page 26



The early years of displaying at the IAAPA Expo (left) compares little to the gigantic exhibits of the 21st century. COURTESY BOB'S SPACE RACERS



The company's first workshop (left) was needed once Cassata's garage could no longer meet the business needs. Cassata was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 2014 (middle). Family members gather around Cassata upon receiving his Hall of Fame induction (right). COURTESY BOB'S SPACE RACERS

►RACERS

Continued from page 25

was the first installation in an amusement park.

It became evident that an actual work facility, rather than a garage, was needed. Renting a large warehouse, Cassata rented out the extra space, and then had actual working space to manufacture the games. Over time, the other clients would be moved out as business dictated growth.

Bob's Space Racers exhibited at the IAAPA trade show in 1973. With a sold-out floor, the company's first 10-by-10 booth was in the parking garage at the hotel facility. Making a larger booth the following year, a big surprise came when the larger game they brought would not fit

below the ceiling. Removing the ceiling tiles, they found a solution. People then could play the game, and the company won its first IAAPA award. The industry was welcoming the innovation.

This tradition blazed a trail for the IAAPA Expo. People now play games, ride rides, taste food and sample just about anything on the show floor. Bob's Space Racers led the way for participatory booths.

Whac-A-Mole

In the 1970s, the Whac-A-Mole game was invented. In time, the popular game became an iconic part of pop culture with almost everyone understanding the reference. Bob's Space Racers sold its first machine in 1977 and



holds the licensing rights to the brand.

"You see it in television and movies," said Mendes. "When the Secretary of Defense uses [the term] Whac-A-Mole, you know the word has gotten around."

Whether single player versions for redemption tickets or competition multiplayer versions, the concept of hammering comical critters that pop their heads from holes in the game cabinet took visitors by storm. Numerous parks have customized their own themes to the famous game.

A brief flirtation with a home version appeared in 1999, allowing families to whack critters to their hearts' content.

"It is not our most-sold game; water games are our best seller," said Mendes. "But it is definitely our most known game."

Innovations today

Within five decades, the company has invented a long run of successes. Fun themes and competitive play have made for countless sales.

Hang Time is the company's newest game. First seen at the IAAPA Expo in 2018, the competition game pits players against the clock or each other to see who can hang from an overhead bar the longest. Hang Time took an IAAPA award for Best New Game.

"The attendant-free FEC games have probably been the biggest success for our customers in the last few years," said Cook. "It has taken us

a while to get it going in the arcade market. To our amazement, wherever we have placed these games, they are either the top game or among the top three or four in every center. We're used to that in the carnival market and park model market, but in the arcade market we have never been a top machine."

This concept takes popular games typically staffed with an operator [in a trailer] and condensed it to a four- or five-player game. Messages are given automatically, and prizes now are awarded by special tickets. Specific prizes — displayed at the game — are set aside at the redemption center specifically for these games. Like the carnival operations, players can trade up for larger prizes. More players can also generate larger prizes.

"For an FEC, you can't sell them a game that requires labor," said Cook. "We have opened up that market by completely eliminating the operator. They are making extremely good revenue. We have our own tickets, our own prizes and our own price point. They will still play the other games for the other redemption prizes."

The company is moving toward the theme park market as well with attendant-free games. While a live staff member might bark in new players and create more revenue, if the game is unstaffed then there is no revenue. BSR feels it is a trade out, and the revenue is still there if not increased because of labor shortages.

50 years of reflection

For his contributions to the amusement industry, Cassata was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 2014.

"Bob was the best teacher anyone could ever have. I wouldn't be here today without him," said Cook. "I knew nothing and went through the school of Bob Hard Knocks. He was a great mentor for me and a great leader for this company. It takes a special person for that."

Today, Cassata has been retired, with Jack Mendes enjoying a semi-retirement working in the operations and park management end of the company. **Glenda Casatta Cook**, Cassata's daughter, is the CEO of the company, while her husband [Jack Cook] has been with the company for more than 40 years and serves as the president. Bob's Space Racers has seen its share of solid business practices, family ties and strong loyalty over the years.

"The growth opportunity for Bob's Space Racers is the best it's been for a long time," said Jack Cook. "Between our attendant-free games and our operations — some places are getting out of operating the games — we consult, we do any of those along with our manufacturing. There are companies that make games, but I don't think they do A to Z. They are not a strategic partner to the operations. We like being a partner with our parks. That part of the business is the sky's the limit. Bob's Space Racers is here to react."

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The collage features a central image of a 'Drop n Twist' roller coaster with checkered cars. To the left, a 'Razzy Cars' ride is visible. The background shows an indoor exhibition space with various signs and structural elements. The entire composition is framed as a scrapbook page with torn paper edges and pushpins.

Fort Worth Stock Show - second year of increased attendance

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

FORT WORTH, Texas. — The 23-day **Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo** recently came off a successful 2020 run. With the theme of “Dream It. Do It,” the January 16 through February 7 event certainly did do it. Attendance clocked in at 1,267,500, besting their 2019 tally by 51,360.

“Weather for our 2020 Show was ideal. Considering our event runs for 23 days in January and February we expect some cold temperatures and moisture. However, the impact was minimal,” said **Matt Brockman**, communications manager. **Mary Talley**, owner **Talley Amusements**, echoed those comments, “The weather was nearly perfect on the weekends.”

For the 18th year, the hometown midway provider brought in 50 rides with nearly half appealing to the kiddie sector. New rides for that spot included Skyline (ARM), Downdraft (Battech) and Orbiter (Tivoli), while the top-grossing rides were Giant Wheel (Lamberink), Iron Dragon Roller Coaster (Interpark) and The Beast (KMG). The Fast Trax Slide (Fabbri) is touted as the largest traveling slide in North

America. The stock show is traditionally the first spot of the year for the Fort Worth based operation.

“We have a great working relationship with Talley Amusements,” said Brockman.

There were four senior citizen general admission discount days, a **Dickies** day, **Texas Christian University** day and a military appreciation day. Some of the live entertainment included **Wynn Williams**, **Curtis Grimes**, **Foreigner**, **Tim Rushlow** and **Rich O'Toole**. The stock show advertises across numerous media – digital (paid social, display and search), TV, radio and print.

Brockman was asked what makes their event stand out. “The Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo have many offerings of a traditional livestock show and rodeo. Moving our rodeo into the new and exciting **Dickies Arena** is what set us apart in 2020.”

There was nearly four acres of local food, vendors and western-wear retailers on the grounds. New this year was the **Corkyard**, a wine tent offering guests another venue to meet friends and unwind. Also making its debut was **ProRodeo Tournament**, the stock shows' new format for rodeo. “It's more fan-friendly and easy for spectators to keep track of

Hometown midway provider, **Tally Amusements** brought in 50 rides, half of which were for younger fair attendees. The **Lamberink Giant Wheel** serves as a backdrop for all the four acres of concessions. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ



the tournament's progress and drama,” said Brockman.

When it came to any challenges, Brockman said, “As mentioned, the most significant change was moving our rodeo into a new multipurpose arena. There are challenges associated with operating in a new and somewhat unfamiliar environment, but the positive change it's bringing about has been tremendous.”

More than 1,800 volunteers kept the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo moving smoothly before, during and after the show's three-week run.

The **Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show**, known commonly as the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo is the oldest continuously running livestock show and rodeo. Since 1896 the stock show offers visitors a chance to experience the unique western lifestyle surrounding the show, along with a one-of-a-kind combination of education, tradition and Western heritage. The non-profit organization annually provides millions of dollars in grants and scholarships to assist the future leaders of agriculture and livestock management.

The 2021 dates are January 15 through February 6.

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Shown above are **Mega-Drop** (left), and **Skyline** (right). Below are **The Beast** (KMG Freak Out) and an **Eyerly spider**. All told, the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo encompasses over 120 acres. AT/SAMMY PICCOLA; COURTESY STEFAN HINZ



A gigantic cowboy boot and spur adorns the entrance plaza outside the new **Dickies Arena**. A continually popular ride is the **ChanceZipper**. The 23-day fair saw attendance increase by 4.5%. AT/SAMMY PICCOLA; COURTESY STEFAN HINZ





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South Florida Fair succeeds with 2020 "Play Ball, Play Fair!" theme

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The South Florida Fair, which ran January 17 through February 2, laid claim to several firsts in its 108-year history, but none so remarkable as the new figurehead behind the 17-day, \$11 million event. When **Victoria Chouris** stepped up as CEO and took over for **Ricky Vymlatil**, a 15-year veteran to role, when he retired last July, she became the first female CEO of the event. And while Chouris is new to the position, she is not new to the South Florida Fair. She started working there over 34 years ago.

Chouris said she often jokes, "I kept putting my nose where it didn't belong, continually got involved in new things, and kept getting promoted." However, there are some things that she doesn't take lightly. "I think having a female in this position for the very first time has opened a lot of eyes even on our staff. I think there's aspirations now that they know it can happen to anybody," she said in a recent interview.

One of her first priorities was to review both the business's and annual event's policies and procedures to be certain that they were up to current standards. This resulted in a new credentialing policy for both employees and visitors, so it was easily identifiable who was on the grounds and that they were where they were supposed to be. She also spearheaded the creation of a space at the fair where individuals with sensory sensitivities can feel safe and recover from the sensory over-



load which can be a challenge for those with autism, dementia, spectrum disorders, or post-traumatic stress disorders.

"Knowing that we are able to serve the needs of families who have a sensory challenge and who may not have previously attended is heartwarming," Chouris said as she discussed the two new quiet rooms, an accompanying app, **KultureCity**, and discussed the training that staff complete to round out the initiative. "We feel gratified knowing that we are going the extra mile to be all-inclusive."

The fair's theme for 2020 was "Play Ball, Play Fair!" and was a nod to the topic of sports, especially America's pastime, baseball, with a focus on competition, fair play, and the zeal to win. As part of the theme, the fair hosted the "Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America" exhibition, in partnership with the **Smithsonian Institution** and the **Florida Humanities Council**, to teach visitors the cultural impact and importance of the different sports in American communities. Additionally, the **National Baseball Hall of Fame's** "Picturing America's Pastime" exhibition offered a snapshot of the photograph collection from the Museum's photo archive, spanning almost 150 years, and featuring work from photographers across many generations of the sport.

In addition to the exhibits, fair visitors were invited to strap on a virtual reality headset and experience simulated activ-



January in South Florida and its mildly warm temperatures make for great fair-going weather. In the late afternoon, the sunsets create a stunning backdrop to the Wade Shows, Inc. rides, but the real light show on the midway really gets going once the sun has set. AT/DAVID FAKE

ities in a variety of sports such as golf, soccer, football, hockey, basketball, baseball, and more. A batting cage, a pitching cage, and a field goal kick were also available to attendees.

Of course, most associated with any fair is its food and rides, and the South Florida Fair obliged with many options for even the most iron-stomached fair foodies and thrill ride enthusiasts.

On the food front, the **Krispy Kreme Donut Burger** was among most popular of the "fair food" delicacies. Other favorites included the **Peanut Butter Ramen Burger**, a burger with Asian slaw between two ramen noodle buns; the giant, deep fried quarter-pound mozzarella cheese sticks; and the **Dilly Dog**, which consists of a hot dog stuffed inside a pickle and then coated in corndog batter and deep-fried — a fair "turducken," if you will.

As for rides, **Wade Shows, Inc.**, founded in 1912 and contracted by the South Florida Fair since 2006, has assembled an array of options for all lev-



RC48 made a return to the 2020 South Florida Fair after an extensive refurbishment. The coaster requires seven trailers to transport it from fair to fair. AT/DAVID FAKE

els of enthusiasts, young and old. New to the fair this year were an expanded kiddie section, **Down Draft**, **Starship 4000**, **Axis**, **Friendly Wheel**, **Seven Seas**, and **Observation Tower** rides, as well as the return of **RC48**, one of the most popular rides it has on the midway. The coaster is the only **Pinfari** RC-48 Model ever produced, and, at 70 feet tall, is currently the second largest portable roller coaster in North America, according to **Frank Zaitshik**, president and CEO of Wade Shows, Inc. In

addition to **RC48**, Wade Shows, Inc. also included its **Mighty Mouse Coaster**, a **Zamperla Twisted Coaster** 420 Spinning Wild Mouse and **Super Cyclone Coaster**, a **Pinfari Super Cyclone** model among the rides at the 2020 fair. **Zaitshik**, who has helmed the company for over 30 years, told *AT* that he is proud to also own a **Schwarzkopf** 65m Wildcat coaster, that is currently undergoing refurbishment. At 250 feet wide, it is currently one of the largest portable coaster in North America.

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The **Krispy Kreme Donut Burger** (left) was among the most popular of the 'fair food' delicacies. Wade Shows, Inc., brought over 200 rides and games to the South Florida Fair. AT/DAVID FAKE



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Pa. Showmen, fairs work together to host 108th convention

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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HERSHEY, Pa. — The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs (PSACF) and the Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA) annual convention took place January 22 – 25 with the theme "Making Memories One Fair At A Time." The spacious Great American Hall at Hershey Lodge and Convention Center was again the venue for the two-and-a-half day trade show, with 160 vendors, filling the 32,000-square-foot space. Seven carnival operators had booths: C&L Shows, Dreamland Amusements, Houghton Enterprises, Lisko Family Midway Amusements, Penn Valley Shows, Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment and Tons of Fun Shows. Both the showmen and fair organizations maintained hospitality rooms as well as Variety Attractions and numerous carnival operators.

Kenny Aronoff, a celebrated rock and roll drummer who has played with over three dozen acts, was the keynote speaker. The motivational speaker served as the drummer for John Mellencamp for 17 years. Aronoff talked about teamwork citing long-standing successful bands like the Beatles, The Who and Led Zeppelin, each persevering as a group. "The team was greater than the individual." He challenged the audience asking, "What is your purpose in life," asking them to follow their heart. Aronoff was brought in by Powers Great American Midway and the PSACF.

Each day contained educational seminars, workshops and table topics. Some of the subjects included: food safety, technology, animal health, attracting new fairgoers, volunteering,



landscaping and beautification of fairgrounds, and controlling unruly crowds. Nightly sold-out banquets, with a different focus each evening, completed the schedules.

The convention continues to receive accolades throughout the industry as one not to miss. "The 2020 convention went very well," said Harry Reffner, PSACF Executive Secretary/Treasurer. "We had approximately 1500 [people] registered. Our trade show has grown. [Attendees] are learning from our table topics and our seminars, going back to their fairs with new ideas, definitely beneficial to everyone that attends." Unlike some other states, the showmen and fair organizations work together to produce this annual event. "The relationship has been established for a number of years. The secretary of the showmen (Bev Gruber) was actually a president of the fair association a number of years ago. We work with them and they work with

The trade show floor (left) was bustling with activity during the two-and-a-half day operation featuring 160 exhibitors. C&L Shows (right) from Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania, was represented by Nick Polakovsky and Jason Geyer. Six other carnival operators had a booth on the trade show floor. COURTESY TIM MCGOWAN STUDIO/PSSA; AT/B. DEREK SHAW

us. Anything we need they get to us, vice versa. It's a good working relationship, [an] open street for both of us."

Bev Gruber, Executive Secretary, PSSA echoed Reffner's comments. "It's been a very exciting convention. Everybody has been sharing ideas. It's probably the best thing that happens at the convention. I've been involved since the late seventies and they always, always have gotten along, the PSACF and the PSSA. They work together, like in the opening ceremonies they always introduce the officers and directors of both associations." Both organizations hold business meetings throughout the year and each send their president and vice president to the other organizations' meetings. "It's a very good combination. There's many, many states that don't have the good working relationship that we do," said Gruber.

Wednesday evening featured an entertainment showcase. This included 19 acts providing all types of music and other entertainment. Six were self-booking while the others



were represented by an agency. Many of these same acts had a presence on the trade show floor with a booth.

Thursday evening's banquet, held by the PSACF, featured introductions of all 59 Fair Queens who were vying for the 2020 Pa. Fair Queen title. Bonnie Oren, with the Perry County Fair was selected as the fair person of the year honoree. Rick Marcione with Skelly's Amusements served as the master of ceremonies. He is also an honorary member of PSACF. The Nelsons provided the entertainment, brought in by Variety Attractions. Opening act was The Hobbs Sisters (self-booking.)

The PSSA banquet Friday evening had a Mardi Gras theme coordinated by the Houghton (Houghton Enterprises) and Bartlebaugh (Bartlebaugh Amusements) families. Marcione again served as the emcee. Larry Johnson with Majestic Midways was named Showman of the Year. He has chaired the association's ways and means committee for numerous years. A check was presented to the Pennsylvania Farm Show Foundation for \$22,330. Half the proceeds from the Showman's Herschel carousel and Hampton mini tractor ride that operated during the eight-day Pennsylvania Farm Show earlier in January. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding made a few remarks to the attendees. "Every year, fairgoers marvel over the midway. Rides, games, food and tradition — the trademarks of the showman's trade. At the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, we are proud to be partners with The Showmen's Association. Providing wholesome entertainment for the public is a lifestyle of work,

but professionals like these men and women make it look effortless." Nine deserving students were presented scholarships. The banquet also included the installation of the 2020 PSSA President, Jeff Good with Goodtime Amusements, Hellertown, Pa. Entertainment was provided by Twitty and Lynn (Conway's grandson and Loretta's granddaughter), courtesy of Anjoli Productions.

The 34th annual Queen Coronation banquet took place Saturday evening. "The Fair Queen program is more than tradition, it is a scholarship program for leaders who are enthusiastic about promoting Pennsylvania's agricultural fairs. The program is an investment in a bright future for the industry." Secretary Redding said. Grace VanSiver representing the Mifflin County Youth Fair took those honors with Abigail Wurzbach, the alternate from the York State Fair. VanSiver is a senior at Mifflin County High School and plans to pursue an engineering degree at Penn State University. She shows rabbits and recently published her first book of poetry, *Dance of the Heart*.

Asked about how the fair season will go this year Reffner responded, chuckling, "You know Mother Nature is a woman and a woman can never make up her mind. I'm not sure what this year will be. Two years ago it was extremely wet. This past year we had some wet season. Some of the fairs could not operate at 100%. It's very difficult. Hopefully it'll be a good year. It's hard to tell. It is Mother Nature."

The 2021 edition takes place January 20-23 at Hershey Lodge.

•pafairs.org
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At left, the team from Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment captured the spirit of the Mardi Gras evening. Above, Audio Innovators, Inc. were represented by Dale (left) and Zackary Hershberger. COURTESY POWERS & THOMAS MIDWAY ENTERTAINMENT; AT/B. DEREK SHAW



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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The **International Association of Fairs & Expositions** Zone I convention will be held May 7-9 in the First Capital of the United States, York, Pennsylvania. It was last held at the **York Fair/York State Fair** 20 years ago. Networking, workshops, and numerous insight opportunities are key components of the event that also includes a zone meeting and general session. Friday afternoon features a trip to the battlefields in Gettysburg. Zone 1 includes fairs from Pennsylvania to Maine.

Numerous IAFE officers will be present including IAFE President and CEO, **Marla Calico**, along with first vice chair **Gene Cassidy**, **Eastern States Exposition (Big E)**, and second vice chair **Jeremy Parsons**, **Clay County Fair**, Spencer, Iowa. Speakers include **Jessica Underwood**, **Erie County Fair**, **David Gordon**, **Maryland State Fair**, **Marlene Pierson**, **Virginia State Fair**, **Nancy Smith**, **South Carolina State Fair**, along with staff from the **York State Fair**: **Bryan Blair**, **Brianna Holmes** and **Rick Trout**.

"We're excited. We have a good program in place. We will be able to showcase our fair and facility." [It will be] a great time for those who come," said **Brian Blair**, York State Fair CEO. The meeting hotel is the **Wyndam Garden York** with dinner, entertainment and hospitality at the **York Expo Center**.

The upcoming IAFE Zone 2 conference is in conjunction with the **Florida Federation of Fairs**, May 14-16, **World Golf Village Renaissance Resort**, St. Augustine Florida. Zone 3 and 6 are having a combined meeting, March 27-29, **DoubleTree by Hilton**, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Zone 4 conference takes place March 22-24, **Radisson Hotel**, La Crosse, Wisconsin, while. Zone 5, 7 and 8 meetings took place earlier this year.

Vicki Chouris is serving her first year as president and CEO of the **South Florida Fair**. The Massillon, Ohio native joined the fair in 1985 as assistant to the CEO. Chouris most recently served as vice president and chief operating officer taking the top spot upon **Rick Vymlatil's** retirement. She's the first woman to serve as CEO in the fair's 108-year history.

The South Florida Fair was founded in 1912. Today they operate with over 50 full-time employees, hosting more than 100 events a year. They also have a living history park on the grounds in Yesteryear Village that is open three days a week, year-round. **Wade Shows** has the ride midway. Complete coverage of this year's fair that took place January 16 - February 6 can be found on page 32.

The **Lycoming County Fair**, Hughesville, Pennsylvania, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. This is also the 50th year of their tractor pull. The fair is asking the public (and readers of this column too) to share any vintage pictures

and memorabilia you may have from any of their past fairs for use with their celebration. Items can be sent to secretary@lycomingfair.net. The July 8-18 fair has midway rides from **SunShine Shows, LLC**.

The **Bremer County Fair**, Waverly, Iowa will soon have a new home. The **Bremer County Fair Association** announced in a Facebook post that they are relocating the fair to a 50-acre tract, that was recently acquired, just off Highway 3, on the east side of Waverly. The location will have state-of-the-art structures available for entertainment, along with 4H and FFA programs. "The city is helping us move to the new spot," said General Manager **Kevin Raising**. Work on the new property is expected to begin within the next year. This year's fair takes place at the current 17-acre **Memorial Park** location on Fifth Avenue in the southwest side of Waverly. The 2020 dates are July 26-Aug. 1 with Iowa-based **Next Generation Shows** handling the midway.

A first-ever county fair takes place this October in Williamson County, Texas. The three-day fair hosted by the nonprofit **Williamson County Fair Association** will be held at the **Williamson County Exposition Center** in Taylor. Events already scheduled include a rodeo, livestock show and carnival.

In December, **Williamson County Commissioners Court** authorized \$100,000 to initiate the project, with reimbursement within four years. The Commissioners Court also has the ability to forgive all or a portion of the seed money.

John Gattis a fair association member said in *The Statesman*, is optimistic the county's inaugural fair will attract a few thousand people. "I hope it grows and gets a whole lot bigger, but for now we have to get our feet wet." The dates are October 22 - 24. (At press time, a carnival provider had not been named.)

A 165-year tradition known as **The Reading Fair**, Reading, Pennsylvania, is officially re-branding itself **The Berks County Fair** this year. (It was reported in the February column as 2021, which was the timetable at press time.) From a post on its Facebook post: "We chose to make this name change as we adjust our mission of our organization to center around agricultural education for the community and a place for the youth in agriculture to thrive."

All former events such as bingo, wine festival and fair will now carry the new name. "The things you know and love about the bingo and wine festival have not changed and we are enthusiastic about what we plan to bring you for our 2020 fair."

While there will not be a large carnival presence, the fair plans to have a few small rides on-site, more closely related to small train rides. The Berks County Fair takes place August 2-7.

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► Cincinnati's Coney Island adding pool obstacle course — page 38

Kings Dominion upgrades, revitalizes underutilized water park area

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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DOSWELL, Virginia — This summer **Kings Dominion** theme park will be opening two new attractions at its Soak City water park. The newly redesigned area, called **Coconut Shores**, replaces the park's 1999 wave pool. The new section will feature a 45-foot-tall waterplay structure called **Lighthouse Landing** and a 3,000-square-foot wave pool called **Sand Dune Lagoon** that is specifically designed for children, along with new food and beverage outlets.

Lighthouse Landing, a waterplay structure from **WhiteWater West**, will include more than 200 interactive elements, eight slides and two tipping buckets. **Sand Dune Lagoon** will give the younger set a wave pool of their own with playful one-foot waves and a maximum depth of 29 inches. It is also equipped with a waterfall and interactive splash elements in the form of a coastal crab as well as a tropical turtle.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) worked with **Kings Dominion** on the **Coconut Shores** renovation project. The park was looking to replace an underused multilevel play structure with a new one. ADG surveyed the site and realized that they could utilize the foundation of the underused, 35,000-square-foot second wave pool to



This overhead view shows how the two new water attractions fit within the former **Big Wave Bay** wave pool. COURTESY ADG

incorporate both the new multilevel play structure as well as ADG's **Mini Harbour** kid's miniature wave pool water ride attraction. This development allowed **Kings Dominion** to revitalize not just an attraction but an entire area of the park.

"Working on the **Kings Dominion** renovation project allowed us to do what we do best — think outside the box. A client came to us with a specific request, budget and time frame for their project. But after looking at their site, we determined

we could reutilize existing foundations, filtration and equipment to maximize their project goals within their budget and their timeline — giving them not only the one ride but two, all within the same footprint. We are very excited to watch the **Kings Dominion** project come to life," said **Jim Dunn**, president of **Aquatic Development Group**.

The new **Mini Harbour** wave pool ranges from beach entry with a zero depth to about 2.5 feet in the "deep" end. In order to

make this wave pool kid-friendly, ADG worked with the construction team to fill areas of the existing wave pool with suitable concrete slab pieces from demolition and traditional infill material, recycling components from the previous attractions. ADG supplied the **WaveTek** technology that produces the gentle one-foot waves and the pumps for the gurgling springs and the waterfalls. ADG also supplied the concrete carving crews who built the custom rockscape and waterfall at

the back of the pool.

In addition to giving kids and their parents a designated area to relax and enjoy the waterfront area, the addition of new food and beverage outlets will provide new avenues of revenue for the park. Designed by the park's own executive chef, guests will get to experience savory dishes with Latin and Asian flavors or enjoy a new take on family favorites like flatbread pizza. A bar area for those 21 and over will feature tropical alcoholic beverages.

Rounding out the renovation, the park is adding a food truck courtyard dining spot near the new **Coconut Shores** water area which will include space for additional deck, tables and chairs. Surrounded by natural landscape and mature trees to provide copious amounts of shade, the new **Coconut Shores** area of the waterpark will be a perfect zone for families to splash, play, dine, drink, relax and enjoy a day at the park.

•kingsdominion.com



An artist rendering illustrates the multitude of interactive elements and slides to keep families entertained on the new **Lighthouse Landing** water play structure (left). **Sand Dune Lagoon** (right) will feature playful, one-foot waves specifically geared for small kids. COURTESY ADG



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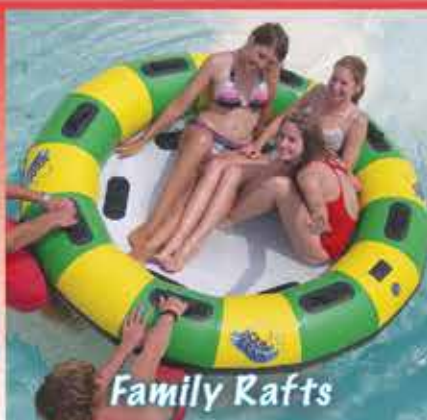
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Cincinnati's Coney Island announces largest pool obstacle course in the U.S.

CINCINNATI, Ohio — **Coney Island Park** announced its newest attraction, the Challenge Zone. The Challenge Zone will feature the largest **Aquaglide** pool obstacle course in the U.S. The massive inflatable obstacle course will be added to the Sunlite Pool this May, when the park opens for its 2020 season.

The Challenge Zone will feature more than 150 feet of climbing obstacles, slides, monkey bars and balance beams organized in the form of two obstacle courses.

"Our team is excited about this new attraction. It's a fantastic addition to our world-famous Sunlite Pool and will be great for both kids and adults, making it perfect for families," stated **Rob Schutter**, president and CEO of Coney Island Park. "We're always searching for new ways to make summer even more fun."

The Challenge Zone is part of Coney Island's multiyear investment plan that will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Sunlite Pool in 2025. Other park enhancements coming this summer include adding new lounge chairs, pool umbrellas and new speakers throughout the pool area, and tripling the live music presented poolside.

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NEWS SPLASH

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Great Wolf Resorts has set Aug. 1, 2020, as the date of the grand opening of the 500-room **Great Wolf Lodge San Francisco** in Manteca, California. As is to be expected, the \$180 million resort will include a 100,000-square-foot indoor water park, a 51,000-square-foot family entertainment center and 12,000 square feet of meeting rooms, along with restaurants and food courts. The FEC will feature the usual attractions popular at other Great Wolf Lodges including Howl in One mini golf, Ten Paw Alley half-scale bowling lanes, Howler Peaks ropes course and MagiQuest.

The water park will include body slides, tube slides, family raft rides, a wave pool, a lazy river, a children's activity pool and a water play structure.

The resort has already started taking reservations for those who just can't wait to "have a howling good time."

Aquapark Reda, an indoor water park in Reda, Poland, has opened Aquaspinner, the first slidewheel in Europe. Developed by **Weigand Waterrides** of Germany, the unique 160-ton enclosed-tube slide spins on its own axis at almost two revolutions per minute. Riders are seated in four-person rafts while splashing through the tube and will experience sudden G-forces, backward movements, pendulum action, moments of weightless and incomparable visuals as light streams through various patterns and colors in the slide tube.

Preparation for the huge device began in April 2019. The entire slidewheel is outside of the indoor park. Riders start inside near the top of the building and because of the unique configuration of the slide wheel, finish at almost the same level as they started.

In response to new regulations as a result of climate change, a planned water park in Valencia, Spain, must meet certain requirements before gaining approval. The proposed water park at **Bioparc Valencia** will be required to meet specific environmental requirements that include conserving energy and conserving its water use. Bioparc Valencia is a 25-acre zoo owned by the city but operated by a private company. It opened in 2008 and was designed to immerse visitors in the animals' habitat and not vice versa. It replaced the city's previous old-style zoo, where animals were kept in cages.

Ground has been broken on Mexico's first Great Wolf Lodge located in Tepeji del Río, Hidalgo, north of Mexico City. Construction of the indoor water park resort is expected to create 3,000 direct and indirect jobs as it continues through the fall of 2021, then up to 900 jobs when it opens. Although specific details of the US\$139.2 million project have yet to be announced, it is expected to follow the winning formula that has made Great Wolf Resorts such a success. The resorts typically feature a large hotel, large indoor water park, FEC-style entertainment center and several dining venues. Some lodges also include outdoor water parks.

After considering more than 170 potential sites in countries all over the world, Hidalgo was chosen for the potential market reach it has in central Mexico. Hidalgo Governor **Omar Fayad Meneses** observed that one-third of Mexico's population lives within a 60-mile radius of the location of the new water park.

Economic growth potential and attractive terms offered by the state government were also contributing factors.

The **Kalahari Resort and Convention Center** in Round Rock, Texas, is expected to be ready for guests this coming November.

The \$550 million, 35-acre African-themed resort will include nearly 1,000 guest rooms, one of the largest indoor water parks in the U.S., a convention center, five restaurants, a spa and more.

Wisconsin-based **Kalahari Resorts & Conventions** currently operates resorts in Wisconsin Dells; Sandusky, Ohio; and the Pocono Mountains region of Pennsylvania. The Texas location will be the company's largest to date.

Dive Bahrain, which claims to be the world's largest underwater theme park, is about to get even bigger. The dive park, located in the Persian Gulf off the coast of the Kingdom of Bahrain, gained notoriety last year when it submerged a decommissioned Boeing 747 aircraft, the largest aircraft ever to be intentionally sunk. For phase two, developers are planning to add a replica of a traditional Bahraini pearl merchant's house, sunken ships, other structures, and sculptures that will be fabricated and submerged to provide a safe haven for coral reef growth and to ensure a sustainable habitat for marine life.

The eco-friendly park has been providing researchers with a rich source of information on marine ecologies, and it aims to enhance environmental awareness on the importance of preserving marine life.

The theme park is part of the **Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority's** strategy of boosting tourism and making greater use of the Kingdom's natural assets. The park has attracted global recognition and has become an international tourist attraction, given its size and location.

Waterworld water park in Stoke-on-Trent in the United Kingdom, has installed new wave machines in the park's main indoor pool. **Murphy's Waves** of Glasgow, Scotland, has supplied a low-energy pneumatic wave generator that uses air from specially designed fan-blowers.

Waves are released into the pool through four concealed wave chambers in the deep end. The wave energy then spreads throughout the pool and breaks onto the beach.

The entire system is controlled by a state-of-the-art computer system which allows the wave machine to produce a variety of different wave patterns every two seconds, with variable wave heights up to 4.5 feet.

The new wave equipment is part of a £100,000 (\$130,000) investment in upgrades.



BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Scene75 founder finds a home in the FEC industry — page 42 / Industry legend Tom Powell passes — page 46

Attractions industry feels the effects of coronavirus outbreak

Parks close, stocks take a hit as impacts are being assessed

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WUHAN, China — Beyond its growing human toll, the effects of the novel coronavirus, officially designated COVID-19 by the **World Health Organization**, is a global health emergency touching the attractions industry worldwide.

The outbreak was first detected in Wuhan in December. Since then, government officials have locked down an increasing number of cities in the surrounding region, halting public transportation in an effort to prevent the disease from spreading. These moves initially impacted more than 40 million people across Hubei province.

As *Amusement Today* went to press in mid-February, cases of the coronavirus had been reported in virtually all parts of the globe. The number of cases internationally exceeded 71,000, with the number of cases in mainland China alone surpassing 70,500 — even with a two-week self-quarantine rule in effect in some of the country's metropolitan areas. The disease had caused at nearly 1,800 deaths, including three outside mainland China.

In late January, **The Walt Disney Co.** was among the first major attraction operators to take preventative steps, shutting down indefinitely large parts of **Shanghai Disney Resort** (including **Shanghai Disneyland**, **Disneytown** and **Wishing Star Park**) and, shortly thereafter, closing **Hong Kong Disneyland** just as the country was preparing to celebrate its Lunar New Year holiday. Many other parks, including **Happy Valley Shanghai** and **Hong Kong's Ocean Park**, followed suit — some under government orders.



Among the major attractions in China that remained closed as of mid-February because of the spreading novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, were **Shanghai Disneyland** and **Hong Kong's Ocean Park**.
COURTESY DISNEY PARKS, EXPERIENCES AND PRODUCTS; OCEAN PARK



"We will continue to carefully monitor the situation and be in close contact with the local government, and we will announce the reopening date upon confirmation," Disney said in an online statement, promising to assist with refunds.

At the same time, **Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group** canceled performances of "Cirque du Soleil The Land of Fantasy" in Hangzhou, China, and **Imax Corp.** postponed theatrical releases planned for the country's New Year holiday.

Industry veteran **Bill Coan**, president and CEO of Orlando-based **ITEC Entertainment Corp.**, an international themed entertainment design and real estate development company, told *AT* that because of the epidemic's growing disruption to the Chinese and global economies, "[many] theme park developers will likely lose hundreds of millions as the spring season, which typically causes an uptick in guests before the busy summer, is halted. Seasonal ramp-up plans have been put on hold.

"While there is no recall precedence for these types of crises, major players in the space, including Disney, are making the right move in proactively protecting their brand and guests by prioritizing safety."

As air carriers have restrict-

ed or canceled flights to and from mainland China, several cruise ships have become floating quarantines and some governments have imposed two-week quarantine rules on certain travelers, companies with active projects in the areas hit hardest by the epidemic have become increasingly concerned and attuned to updates.

"Because China has historically been our most important market, we have closely followed the developments on a daily basis," said **Taylor Jeffs**, president and chief creative officer of North Hollywood, California-based immersive entertainment design firm **Legacy Entertainment**. "Our primary concern has been for the families of our employees, partners and friends, and so far, we are happy to say that none of them have been directly impacted."

Jeffs acknowledged to *AT* that it likely will be months before the long-term effects of the virus on China's entertainment landscape can be comprehended. "We have been impressed with the resiliency of our clients and their desire for new projects to continue to move forward, despite the global uncertainty and new way of working," he said. "It would have been very easy to use this virus as a valid reason to pump the brakes on some developments, but so far, we have not

seen this happening."

For some companies, retraction may become necessary before long. In early February, the **International Monetary Fund** in Washington, D.C., warned that the coronavirus may bring a slowdown in world economic growth in the short term. One report suggested that it could become the costliest-ever epidemic, projecting that the virus will cost China about \$62 billion, or 2% of the country's GDP, in the first quarter of this year.

While highlighting improved attendance and revenue numbers at its domestic parks in the first quarter of its new fiscal year, Disney was bracing for a likely two-month closure of its China parks. Hong Kong Disneyland was already seeing depressed numbers because of riots in the city. The coronavirus, the company predicted, will incur additional operating income losses of about \$175 million between its Shanghai and Hong Kong properties in its second quarter.

After Disney closed its Shanghai theme park, shares slipped in early trading in a move that would extend the stock's six-month decline to around 4.8%, according to *TheStreet.com*.

Meanwhile, Disney is lending a 60-hectare site it was reserving for the expansion of its Hong

Kong park on Lantau Island to the government for coronavirus quarantine facilities. The government needed the facilities to bring back some 2,200 residents stranded in Hubei province because of the outbreak.

ITEC's **Bill Coan** observed that the attractions industry has not confronted an epidemic of this magnitude since the SARS outbreak in 2002-03. "There were far fewer precautions taken at that time, which I believe has fueled businesses to improve their response to the coronavirus," Coan said. "I see this most recent outbreak as a 'lesson learned' type of proactive reaction as theme parks work to quickly mitigate risk as fast and as efficiently as possible. It will soften the blow to the business model in the long run."

The **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)**, which is constantly monitoring the coronavirus developments globally, has canceled its **Meet IAAPA** event scheduled for March 22 in Beijing. For IAAPA members impacted by or seeking information about COVID-19, visit the **IAAPA Asia Pacific Information Exchange Group** at the IAAPA Member Resources for Coronavirus (COVID-19) link on the organization's website.

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Florida week filled with trade shows, fairs, meetings and banquets

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RIVERVIEW, Fla. — It started with the **South Florida Fair**, West Palm Beach and ended the day before activities started in Tampa and Gibsonton — Gibtown, as attendees refer to it. Central to events concentrated in the Sunshine State was the 52nd annual **International Independent Showmen's Foundation (IISF) annual Super Trade Show & Extravaganza** — a four-day buying bonanza for rides, games, trailers, plush, insurance and ancillary products and services. Over 8,000 carnival/industry attendees roamed the 20-acre site — indoors and out, where 170 exhibitors set up shop. Vendors from all over the United States, were represented along with manufacturers from Canada, Czech Republic and Italy. This is the largest carnival trade show in the U.S., designed to help get showmen ready for their upcoming season.

There were 17 inside "rookie" vendors including **Betson Enterprises, CRT Logistics, Designs in Motion, Follow It GPS, Funpass, ICE Signs, P&H Crystalite and Peak of Charm**. Surrounding the complex were **American Tent, CoCo Bongos, Elaut USA, H L Enterprises, Industrial Frigo, Midway Tents, New Horizon FRV, Pol-Rides and Scooza**.

Len Soled, owner, **Rides 4 U, Inc.** talked about the show from his perspective. "We have been happy with the results this year. We have seen a lot more people. Last year we felt that it was extremely light. It has picked up. It's not back to the 'good old days,' but it's coming back this

Part of the outdoor midway as seen from the **Frederiksen Industries, Inc. Fun Slide**. There were 170 exhibitors, up 33 vendors from 2019. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



year. We are very happy with the results." The New Jersey enterprise sold several new rides and several used ones. "We had groups from around the world, from Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and Ecuador. England and Scotland were both here as well to represent those countries," he said.

Bates Amusements bought the first Sky Flyer kiddie roller coaster. "We're putting one on a trailer that should be up and operating for this season. We always work well with **Eric [Bates]**. He went for the first mini Breakdance and helped us get that thing better mounted and more organized to go down the road, and the same thing we're going to do with this roller coaster. We do have a lot of interest. The game plan here is get one out successfully. Then it should take right off. That's the goal. It seems like the parks seem to love that piece," said Soled.

The show is not just for carnival-based operators. "There

was a smaller but a decent percentage of park owners that were here," said Soled. This included **John Aerie** and crew from the **Fun Spot** locations in Florida and Georgia; **Dick Knoebel, Knoebels Amusement Resort; Scott Simpson, Playland's Castaway Cove**, Ocean City, New Jersey; **Chris Maier, Land of Make Believe**, Hope, New Jersey; and **Joe Golder, Old Orchard Beach**, Maine. "I think it gives them an opportunity to see a lot more equipment here, out on the field. I saw a couple of FECs walking around. That made it kind of interesting. I wouldn't expect to see them here," said Soled.

For the first time in 50 years, **Wisdom Rides of America** did not have a ride on display, however the company was busy with interest on a new ride along with their staple pieces. **Jared Davis**, president, shared his take on activity. "The show has been good. The traffic on

the first day was very steady. The right people were here." He then talked about their latest product line. "We have some great new pieces, some great new theming on our Himalayas that have been very popular; the Hawaiian Express turned out amazing." The Music Express is still the bread and butter of the company. "We'll be delivering some of those this year, still." The company fast-tracked a new Tornado in time for Knoebels Amusement Resort's April 25 opening day. The deal was made at the IAAPA trade show in November. "We are able to fit in in our production, some of our new production styles," said Davis.

The show served as a kick-off to a joint ride venture announcement between **Rides 4 U** and **Wisdom** on a brand-new ride. The concept was created

by **Mark Blumhagen**, **Rides 4 U** and will be manufactured by the Colorado-based ride supplier. "It is a new style on a couple of different concepts of rides. It will have ten cars on it. The center turntable will rotate and they will be free-wheeling cars that will be picked up and then dropped down-kind of like a pinball machine. It has a capacity of about 20 to 30 people, (20 adults, 30 kids), with a 45-minute set-up with two people. It should be a great twist on some classics that are proven throughout time. We hope to deliver the first one in the fall of 2020," said Davis.

Soled chimed in, "We introduced it on Day One. Day Two we had the first customer in line to buy one. It will be out for next season. The excitement is this is a totally new concept that **Mark** came up with. We feel it is going to be the new version of the **Tilt-A-Whirl** [and bumper cars] on steroids." **Tim Casper, PBJ Happee Day Shows** is the buyer of the inaugural piece.

Blumhagen is no stranger to designing rides. When he was 15, he invented the **Heart Flip**. Other credits (in whole or in part) include **Cliff Hanger** lay down cars, **Wisdom Monster Truck** ride, **Zendar** and **Storm Trooper**.

For the first time this year, **NAARSO** Level I training and certification was conducted at the show, by **Michael Wood, Wood Entertainment Company**. A new Florida law requiring **NAARSO**-certified inspectors to oversee daily ride inspections

► See FLORIDA, page 41

OABA hosts week of events

TAMPA, Fla. — In concert with the IISF convention, the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** held a slew of events throughout the week. Events included an H-2B update, 2019 Hall of Fame and Pioneer recipients' reception, board and committee meetings, **TopGolf** fundraiser, and annual meeting with chairman's reception.

Greg Chiecko, who just completed his inaugural year at the helm, provided an overview of the week in the Sunshine State. "It's always a busy week for Florida week in Tampa. We started the week out with great weather. We had our big Top Golf event and our board meeting. The culmination is the 55th annual meeting." Chiecko thought attendance was robust. "It's always strong. We filled the room here [**Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel**]. We are getting more people coming. From what I am hearing, people are buying out at the trade show in Gibtown and I think the whole industry is on the move in a positive direction. We're still trying to straighten out our H-2B labor which is the thing that plagues us all. Overall we had a great year."

The association will continue to focus on labor issues this year as well as a new initiative. "We are definitely rolling out in a big way, our **VOLT (Virtual OnLine Training)** program so that operators have a basic training platform to work from and continue their education. It's all online. You can do it on your phone. You can do it on your tablet. [Additionally] we participate in a lot of safety seminars. We just keep plugging along and as money allows, we'll keep expanding our programs," said Chiecko.

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SLA active during Florida week

TAMPA, Fla. — Another organization that was active during the IISF trade show in Gibtown, was the **Showmen's League of America**. Executive Secretary **Cindy Henning**, talked about the week: "The Gibtown tradeshow is the perfect chance for our board members, who are scattered throughout the US and Canada, to meet and make decisions about our short and long term goals."

"On Wednesday, our Long Range Planning Committee met to discuss...you guessed it... our long range plans. Thursday, we got together with our St. Louis chapter at the Gibtown club to have a couple of drinks, eat some good food, and spend a little time with industry colleagues. Friday,

the SLA was all business with three different meetings," said Henning.

The SLA scholarship committee discussed all the applications submitted — awarding \$89,000 in tuition scholarships — a record number. Following that meeting, the Nominating Committee met and decided on all of the board member applications that were submitted.

2020 President **Mary Chris Smith** discussed the upcoming year, fundraisers and potential new charitable opportunities. Attendees were asked to pray for **Father John Vakulskas, Jr.** who is battling cancer. He was a staple in the carnival industry and was in everyone's thoughts.

NICA hosts Expo and Food Show

TAMPA, Fla. — Kicking off a day before the start of the IISF convention was the **National Independent Concessionaires Association (NICA) Business Expo and Fare Foods Show**. With a theme of Focus on the Future, the three-day event was held in the **Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel**.

"We enjoy having people from all over the industry and fairs included. We offer educational seminars, the food show, our general membership meeting and we end the event with a gala. We have free food and drink — it's a great time," said **Kathy Ross**, immediate past president.

New this year is the establishment of a foundation. "We have opened a 501c3 foundation. We're rolling that out here, and we're excited to be able to offer more educational opportunities and scholarships to our members," said Ross.

Workshops offered included "Active Shooter and other Emerging Insurance Risks," "From Container to Concession Stand," "Propane 411," "Safety and Security" and "Food Trends Cooking." Roundtable topics covered sales tax, tip jars, transfer of ownership experience and urgent care health coverage.

A popular event during the two-evening food show are qualifying drawings occurring every half hour. Explaining the Cash Bonanza event, Ross said, "We have a sponsorship from **Allied Specialty Insurance**. They give us \$2,500. We pull names and give that money away at the end of the event."

NICA was formed in 1993 by a group of independent concessionaires who were interested in creating improvements within the fair and festival industry. Today there are nearly 1,200 members. Fare Foods, a leader in distributing concession supplies, food products and equipment to the mobile concessions industry, has been coordinating the annual food show for 25 years.

►FLORIDA

Continued from page 40

precipitated the proactive move. In addition, the **Amusement Ride Safety Division** of the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** also offered testing for individuals who will be inspecting rides in the Sunshine State. Workshops were again offered. H-2B, industrial fork lift training, and ServSafe certification were some of the topics.

Teresa Rimes, trade show secretary for the IISA, said the week was "absolutely fantastic.

Attendance was way up over last year. Everything has been right on [schedule]. About 8,000 people attended the show this year in four days." The registration glitches endured previously were non-existent this year, thanks to a high number of pre-registered attendees.

Asked about 2021, Rimes said, "Dates are a little different next year. We're going to work later. Dates are February 16-19." This is due to Tampa hosting the **Super Bowl LV** during the time typically chosen for the Gibtown event.

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Family endeavor Scene75 builds up community, maintains heart

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DAYTON, Ohio — After a series of tornados — including one measuring F3 — ravaged Dayton, Ohio, on May 27, 2019, the community was stunned. The National Weather Service described the storms as “large and destructive,” injuring several people, triggering mass power outages across the state and causing extensive damage to homes, businesses and roads. One of the business devastated by the strong storms was the original **Scene75** family entertainment center, which called Dayton its home.

The company’s founder, **Jonah Sandler**, found himself writing a letter to his community and customer base letting them know that the facility would have to be closed for repairs. It began, “On May 27th 2019, fifteen tornadoes tore through Dayton. Scene75 Dayton suffered significant damage. Large portions of our roof blew away. Sprinkler pipes broke, flooding much of the building. Several air conditioning units are no longer on our roof and, frankly, can’t be found. Walls that once stood nearly 36 feet tall crumbled to the ground.

“Yet despite the physical damage, I am forever grateful of the outcome. No one was injured, and my team members still have homes to return to at night. I am afraid that many of our neighbors were not as fortunate, and our hearts go out to all of them. If there is anything we can do as we work tirelessly to clean and rebuild here, my team and I are ready to support. This is our community. This is our home.”

Sandler’s belief in community and the strength in working with and building from the community has been a core



Jonah Sandler

value of Scene75 from the very beginning.

“What we do in our industry, I truly believe, impacts so many. And the thing that has inspired me to continue to give it all is the impact that I see in our community just from the brand itself.”

However, the amusement industry and the family entertainment center business was something that Sandler almost had to stumble upon, through his love and connection with his family.

“My father’s [Les Sandler, co-founder of Scene75] background was in real estate and he owned, with his investors, the building that currently houses Scene75 Dayton. At the time, I was in grad school in Chicago finishing my MBA and on the last day of my summer banking internship, in 2008, half my office was fired. And I then really got to thinking, ‘Is this what I really want to do?’ Especially when I see my classmates who worked 100 hours per week with me, who had all the same grades, same experiences the year prior asked to leave with all their belongings. The recession also hit back home in Ohio, and my father and his investment group were challenged to fill some of their vacant parcels. The catalyst for moving back to Ohio was to try and figure out plans for what to do with this



large building.”

Les Sandler happened to have some familiarity running arcades, having been part of a chain of arcades that operated across Canadian malls. In addition, the Sandlers had worked with two smaller FECs in the Dayton area known as the **Englewood Fun Center** and Centerville’s **The Chaos Room**. Both were smaller concepts, structured to be built as add-ons to a neighboring restaurant.

“I moved back to try to push through on my passion of trying to help my family. The idea of taking a big box and turning it into a family entertainment center was super-inspiring. It was just a mission to try and create something for the community, and the hope of helping my family and building a career for myself ... and it was pretty exciting.

“One of the things I learned after dabbling with the

Starting with indoor go-karts (above) and arcade games, and expanding into virtual reality, indoor sports, rides and roller coasters (below), Scene75’s attraction offerings have continued to get bigger as the chain has grown and expanded. Throughout its growth, the company has remained focused on community and family. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



Englewood Fun Center and The Chaos Room was that if I was going to be in this industry, I wanted to go big or go home. Wrapping it all up into this big project is what I felt the Dayton market needed to fill a very noticeable void.”

In 2012, when Scene75 Dayton opened, the once amusement park-rich southwestern Ohio market was fairly sparse. Dayton-area residents had a few small FECs in the area, but were nearly an hour drive from **Kings Island** or **Coney Island** (Cincinnati). In addition, no **TopGolf**, **Main Event** or similar had come to the area yet, with only one **Dave & Buster’s** location open in the northern Cincinnati-area, again, still an hour drive away for most.

“Entertainment centers of the time were typically pretty small, and there’s a pretty passionate customer base in the Dayton market,” stated Sandler. “The opportunities all aligned with my personal interest and desires.

“We didn’t have the capital to do it all, so we did a number

of revenue shares with manufacturers to really get the ball rolling from the beginning. We had separate operating partners. We had a separate partner for the bounce facility, my uncle and our roofer were involved in the go kart track. We pretty much carved out different components. We had a revenue share on our 4D theater, we had a revenue share on our laser tag ... all these different things to piece it together.

“I also felt like I had put my prior path on hold, if not aside, ... I had spent so much time in schooling trying to pursue a career in finance or investment banking, and I went through the CFA programs, I did all this stuff for it to line up. And I knew that I had to make Scene75 work, because I was turning my back on all of that. I wasn’t passionate about finance, but Scene75 was my passion. And knowing that if we could make this work, I’d be helping my family and try to help a community and build a



After the devastating tornado hit Dayton, Ohio, in May of 2019, Scene75’s original location was left in devastation with massive flooding, entire sections of the roof missing and more. The recently installed Moser Drop Tower was one of the few things in the building left relatively unscathed by the powerful storm. COURTESY SCENE75

► See SCENE75, page 43



Scene75's expansion into Columbus (above left) created the chain's largest entertainment center to date. Housing close to 250 arcade games, the Columbus location offers challenges and experiences for all ages. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

►SCENE75

Continued from page 42

career. That was all the inspiration I needed. Every hour, I was fine working through it."

Sandler and his team's perseverance succeeded. In July of 2012, when the facility opened its doors, the community had been paying attention to the project all along and were eagerly awaiting its arrival.

"We had built a strong opening on our social media channels prior to opening. This was at a time when there were a lot of articles and commentary wondering if Facebook could truly help businesses. What we found was that before we even opened our doors, we had roughly 25,000 people on our Facebook page. They bought into the idea, they were actually following our story. I shared the personal journey and the struggle throughout. When we finally opened, we had people who came in just to meet me. It was unreal. The way I announced our opening was I essentially held open the door on a Facebook video and said 'come on in, we're officially open.' And people started to come.

"The amazing thing was, when people came for that very first time, they fell in love. They knew the story because of what we broadcast on social media. The community got to understand how we were doing this and why we were doing it, and they were patient with us from the beginning to grow into the space. When we first opened, we had 120,000 square feet and probably 55 arcade games. Once we reopen after the repairs from the 2019 tornado, that number will be closer to 200 arcade games."

As the Dayton community welcomed Scene75, and enabled it to expand and grow, Scene75 found unique ways to deepen its involvement with the community around it.

"I love that we're able to get involved with school programs.

We're involved at **Wright State University**, doing a summer camp at their business school. There, students complete in a one-week-long business course challenge, where the challenge that they're trying to solve involves a real-world problem that we're facing. And, at the end of the week, they present their solutions to our problem to us, a panel of business leader judges, the Dean and their parents. Programs like this extend from elementary school all the way on up. It's a tremendous feeling when you feel like what you're doing on a daily basis is far more important than the individual, you can really impact far larger."

A larger impact for communities, and the Scene75 brand, was what Sandler had in mind as the company expanded over the years. First adding a location in Cincinnati in 2015, Scene 75 quickly added additional locations in Cleveland (2017), Pittsburgh (2018) and, in 2019, opened their largest location yet in Columbus.

"Originally, it was never about trying to grow this into multiple locations," said Sandler. "What happened, ultimately, is that we were seeing success and, being from Cincinnati, my family identified an opportunity which we felt would be right for an entertainment center. At the time, I explained to my father that I had a 'grow or go' philosophy. I'd opened Dayton and operated it for two-plus years, I felt that we could keep our management in place there and I could potentially go do something else, create something else on my own. I knew that it was going to commit my own efforts to this industry, which I enjoyed, then I want to grow it."

The expansions into other markets have not only been successful, but have opened the door for Scene75 to experiment with its business model and explore different attractions and entertainment offerings. The Columbus location

debuted with with Spin-Zone bumper car attraction, an SBF/Visa spinning coaster from **Rides 4 U** and a **Moser** drop tower that bounced between the facility's floors.

"We continue to look at our model and try to identify how we can stay competitive and unique. We felt that rides elevate the status of what we've become and what Scene75 represents as an entertainment center. In Columbus, we have not only the only indoor coaster in the market but only the second roller coaster in the area. The experience that our guests have, that families can enjoy these rides together, the smiles that are on people's faces can't be replicated in many ways.

"The Drop Tower was our first ride, debuting at the Dayton location about three months prior to the tornado. What I noticed after we installed that was the number of pictures and videos taken and shared by parents increased significantly." Those pictures will only increase more once the Dayton facility reopens, with an indoor, two-story **Chance Rides** carousel, as well as an SBF/Visa Spinning Coaster 5.0 from **Rides 4 U** set to debut when Scene75 opens its doors again.

The expansion into other markets also offered Scene75 the opportunity to experiment and tinker with its food and beverage offerings. Originally, at the Dayton location, their food model was based on quick service and no meal over \$10.

"We have five locations now, and we've tested and toyed with different food models. We've tried the traditional sports bar [in Dayton], we've tried the themed-outing with our **Illusions Restaurant** [in Columbus] and we've tried the food truck concept," offered Sandler. "The food trucks, they're actual food trucks that we cut in half, have them mounted to walls and then built kitchens behind them. It's essentially a food court, but it takes on the look

of food being delivered and served by a food truck.

"The evolution is that we continue to experiment. Even with the five locations we have, I don't think we've identified what model we feel is truly our best to run forward with. I think that's part of the fun of the industry, that I don't have to do things exactly as we did them before. We're an entertainment space. We can continue to experiment."

One area that Sandler and Scene75 haven't had to experiment much with is with their Scene75 management and operations team. Starting from that initial Dayton location, as Scene75 has grown and expanded, Sandler has nurtured and promoted from within, letting valuable team member grow and develop the facilities right alongside he and his father. For example, **Maggie McCartney** started as an employee at the original Scene75, but as the chain expanded so did her duties. Now, as the director of art and design for the entirety of the Scene75 chain, all of the family entertainment center's designs and graphics are created or overseen in-house by McCartney and her team.

"Our general manager in Columbus was a guest service manager in the Cleveland location, and she worked her way up to a further position there," said Sandler. "When we opened Columbus, she was an Ohio State University graduate, so she was willing to move to Columbus and help us open the Columbus location.

"I would say 70% of our management staff are people who've grown through the organization, and then we try to balance it out for diversity and different opinions from people coming from other entertainment centers and others who are brand new to our industry. Putting people first is our core value."

The Scene75 team is unmistakable at industry trade shows, often canvassing the **IAAPA Expo** aisles in matching black

Scene75 polos. They travel the show floor aisles together, as a family. Evaluating booths, attractions and whatever they encounter at the expo with one another almost immediately.

"My dad and I realized early on that this was going to be about the team," stated Sandler. "Pretty much every year that we go to the IAAPA Expo, we continue to grow the number of people that we take. The first year there were a handful of us, this year we had close to 15 of us."

With May 2020 rapidly approaching, it's nearing a full year since Scene75 shuttered its doors temporarily as a result of the tornado. Damage to the indoor entertainment center totaled more than \$7 million, according to records submitted to the Montgomery County Auditor's Office.

"While my team suffered in disbelief, there was no time for us to stand still. As many of our team members waded through and inventoried the wreckage, another group of us assembled — in a still wet room inside the building — to plan for the rebuild," explained Sandler.

"My biggest challenge as an individual is separating personal and business because I enjoy it so much that they all collide. It's a beautiful thing, but it also poses challenges. You never turn it off. There's no 'off' button. I make myself accessible to my teams, I make myself accessible to vendors, I make myself accessible to our communities. It can be exhausting, but at the end of the day, typically you can go to bed with a sense of accomplishment and that you're fulfilled."

Sandler and the Scene75 team are currently hoping to have the Dayton location reopen sometime in May of 2020.

As almost a mantra for the community and Scene75 as a whole, Sandler offered: "My team and I will be giving this our best as that is what our community deserves. Scene75. Bigger. Better. Stronger. Dayton Proud."

•scene75.com

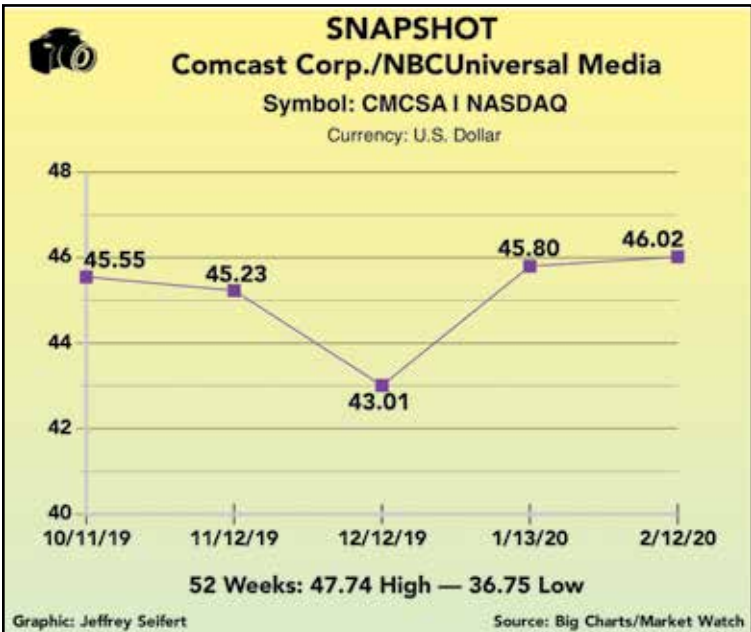


Multiple locations include the popular Spin Zone bumper car attraction which was one of the first rides offered to Scene75 guests. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Market Watch					
Company	Symbol	Market	Price 02/12/20	High 52-Week	Low 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	62.86	32.39	64.97
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	54.09	64.86	45.58
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	46.02	47.74	36.75
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	141.85	153.41	107.32
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.18	0.27	0.16
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	70.43	80.75	67.32
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	3600.00	4830.00	3560.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.75	1.86	0.68
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	13.25	17.00	10.87
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	33.66	34.64	23.68
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	117.23	135.32	100.00
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	855.00	1886.00	826.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	36.09	36.74	23.12
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	38.97	63.97	35.06
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	756.00	774.00	642.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	3.99	4.1	2.30

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

Worldwide Markets: **ASX**, Australian Securities Exchange; **CSE**, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; **LSE**, London Stock Exchange; **NYSE**, New York Stock Exchange; **NASDAQ**, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; **SEHK**, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; **SZSE**, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; **TSEC**, Taiwan Stock Exchange, Corp.; **TYO/TSE**, Tokyo Stock Exchange
 —SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal



Diesel Prices		
Region (U.S.)	As of 02/10/20	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$2.962	-\$0.069
Midwest	\$2.776	-\$0.073
Gulf Coast	\$2.675	-\$0.101
Mountain	\$2.895	0.025
West Coast	\$3.098	0.046
California	\$3.784	0.070

Currency	
On 02/12/20 \$1 USD =	
0.9161	EURO
0.7731	GBP (British Pound)
109.83	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9771	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4900	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3295	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Betson Enterprises boosts customer service

CARLSTADT, N.J. — Arcade and amusement equipment/parts distributor **Betson Enterprises** has introduced a customer service case inquiry feature at betson.com. Customers can fill out a simple online form for concerns or questions related to orders, repairs, advance replacements or general inquiries. “Providing superior customer service is what we do, and this is yet another option for our customers to relay their inquiries to us,” said **Dennis Graham**, Betson’s director of parts sales and customer service. In addition, **Christine Muller** and **Luis Osorio** recently joined the customer service team to work on advance replacement parts, repairs and the nationwide customer service phone loop. **Concetta Benigno** manages the department out of the company’s New Jersey headquarters.

Six Flags relocating to North Texas stadium

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** is moving its headquarters and more than 120 full-time employees to the **Globe Life Park** stadium complex from its existing base in nearby Grand Prairie. The theme park company has signed a 15-year lease for the entire fourth floor of the Center Field Office Tower, currently home to the **Texas Rangers Baseball Club**, which is moving to new offices elsewhere in the complex. Globe Life Park is adjacent to **Six Flags Over Texas**, the company’s first park, opened in 1961. “Six Flags and the Texas Rangers share a long history as the original venues that made up the **Arlington Entertainment District**,” said **Mike Spanos**, president and CEO of Six Flags. “We want to thank the Texas Rangers, Arlington Mayor **Jeff Williams** and the city council for bringing the world’s first regional theme park company back to where it all began.”

Triotech acquires attraction supplier CL Corp.

MONTREAL — Strengthening its position as a leading provider of media-based interactive attractions, **Triotech** has acquired Le Rheu, France-based **CL Corp.**, which specializes in the design of immersive and interactive animation experiences. Noted for its flagship project *Attention Menhir!*, a 300-seat 4D theater experience at **Parc Astérix** near Paris, and with more than two decades of creating attractions for parks, zoos, aquariums and other leisure facilities, the new subsidiary will enable Triotech to expand globally and take advantage of CL’s extensive know-how in simulators and platform motion as well as its special effects and virtual reality expertise. Together, the two companies will have an increased presence worldwide, with locations in Canada, Europe, the Middle East and China.

In brief...

- Launching the New Year seven times brighter and with four times its previous resolution, **Viva Vision**, the massive, canopy-shaped **Fremont Street Experience** video screen in downtown Las Vegas, has completed a \$32 million renovation. Now boasting nearly 50 million LEDs, the iconic multi-program presentation can be enjoyed 24 hours a day for the first time.
- The **Oregon Coast Aquarium** in Newport has kicked off a fundraising campaign for an \$18 million expansion. Plans for the project, the first major remodeling of the facility since its opening to the public in 1992, call for a general upgrading and the addition of a marine rehabilitation center and an outdoor play area.
- This year, **Galaxyland**, the 165,000-square-foot amusement park inside **West Edmonton Mall** in Alberta, Canada, will see a cohesive thematic upgrade — thanks to a licensing deal struck between the mall and toy company **Hasbro**. The park’s two dozen rides and attractions will sport makeovers reflecting **G.I. Joe**, **My Little Pony**, **Play-Doh** and other Hasbro brands.

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Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Christine Buhr is the owner of **Shakers Fun Centre**, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, which opened in 2006. The seven-acre facility has two outdoor go-kart tracks, an 18-hole miniature golf course, bumper cars, arcade, mini bowling, climbing and play structures and a large party room.

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Member, International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions
- Member and current chair, IAAPA FEC Committee
- Member of Entrepreneurs' Organization and current global events chair
- Entrepreneurial Masters Certificate from MIT Sloan School of Management

Buhr continues her amazing journey

CALGARY, Alberta — Christine Buhr said she is an entrepreneur at heart.

"I feel like anything could knock me down and beat me up, and I would still get back up and keep trying," Buhr said.

She notes this attribute can have a negative impact at times. She does try to stay mindful, resilient and balanced, three skills that have helped push the long life of Shakers Fun Centre.

Buhr's story in the amusement industry is unique. She had no experience in the industry, nor did her family or friends. Yet much like others in the industry, she is hooked and it looks like she will stay that way.

"It is so exciting," she said. "We are making people happy every day, and that is very impactful and important. We create a fun space for families to connect."

Standing among her fun center with two go-kart tracks, an 18-hole miniature golf course, laser tag, climbing wall, mini bowling alley, inflatables and arcade, she does wonder how they made it that far.

"We didn't know what we were doing when we started this," she said. "I had some business acumen, but it didn't fully prepare me for running an FEC."

Buhr grew up in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. When she was only 14 years old, her family became involved in franchises of the Body Shop, a retail shop that carries cosmetics and skin-care products. And became passionate about working at an early age. After high school, she did go to university for a couple of years, but, "I was lured into work. It was way more exciting."

As her family became more invested in their franchises, her father-in-law decided to develop a software program to help them with inventory management. That software program sprouted into another company called J. Commerce. It was expanded to include overall management features such as point-of-sales.

Buhr ended up managing the support department of J. Commerce. She travelled extensively in Canada and the U.S., helping to install and then manage the program for other businesses.

She also stayed involved in the running of the Body Shop franchises.

However, in the early 2000s, two events took place that dramatically changed the trajectory of her family's business. One was the sale of J. Commerce to IBM. The other was the loss of The Body Shop franchises. Around 2007, Body Shop became a part of L'Oréal group, which rolled back the franchises in Canada, wanting to take more control over the business.

"We had been a part of The Body Shop for 17 years," Buhr said. "We just asked ourselves, What do we do next?"

A possible answer presented itself when Buhr attended her first Family Entertainment trade show.

"We started to explore the idea of a go-kart track," Buhr said.

We attended the International Association for the Leisure and Entertainment Industry (IALEI) in Las Vegas that year to check it out. (IALEI merged with IAAPA in 2009.)

"I just wasn't sure about it," she said. "I had just had my daughter and wasn't sure I wanted to get involved in something entirely new."

But she went to take a look.

"I fell in love with the whole concept," Buhr said.

She was entirely in as were other members of her family.

"Mentally, we were starting with just a go-kart track," Buhr said.

Physically, they ended up with a seven-acre facility, with multiple attractions, and felt a bit over their heads.

They opened Shakers Fun Centre in 2006 with two outdoor go-kart tracks, bumper cars, Water Wars attraction, an 18-hole miniature golf course and a variety of indoor activities such as laser tag, arcade, indoor playground and a food concession area. They began marketing to the community, touting their ability to host birthday parties and corporate parties.

"We ended up adding a 6,000-square-foot events space just to hold our groups," Buhr said.

Christine Buhr

Owner

Shakers Fun Centre
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



They were hosting groups ranging in size from 100 to 1,000, feeding them from an incredibly small kitchen with none of the right equipment, but they figured it out.

It was a struggle, though, identifying how to grow, how to market, where to market. They hired many different consultants and quickly found there were good consultants and bad ones.

"We found we had to be the ones deciding on what changes were best for the business and not listen to all of the advice from outside influences," she said.

Buhr also found some disparity as a woman hiring upper-level management male employees.

"I wanted it to be a collaborative working environment. What I discovered, however, that by my asking for advice and suggestions from some of my male managers, that it made it appear that I needed help."

She eventually learned how to strike that balance between being "a dictator boss" and creating a collaborative environment.

"I have a world-class team now,"

she said. "I have people who would follow me anywhere. We truly care about each other."

The recession that hit the U.S. in 2008 made its way to Canada a year or two later. It hit Buhr's market and business slowed. But they worked their way through that.

Business was up and down, but over the past four years, Buhr said her area of Canada has been hit with a declining economy, one she feels will take her business under. In fact, she has already started the process of closing and selling the property.

But when one door closes, another opens, and she is already looking inside that door. She doesn't exactly know what is on the other side, but she is confident it will be in the amusement industry.

Buhr sees a lot of potential growth in the FEC area of the amusement industry. She is seeing a lot of growth in virtual reality, E-sports and customer experience.

"This has been an experience like no other," she said. "And it will continue to be an amazing journey."

—Pam Sherborne

Tom Powell, outdoor amusement industry legend, passes away

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Thomas Joseph "Tom" Powell passed away at Alive Hospice in Nashville on January 21, 2020, at the age of 86.

Born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, on July 18, 1933, Powell was a graduate of the University of Scranton. He was a writer, editor and columnist, beginning that career at the local newspaper in Scranton. He left there in 1958 for Nashville, Tennessee, becoming a sports writer for *The Tennessean* until 1972.

During his stint at *The Tennessean*, Powell's beat included covering NASCAR racing at the Nashville Speedway, but he was responsible for a variety of other duties including hosting a radio show from the newspaper.

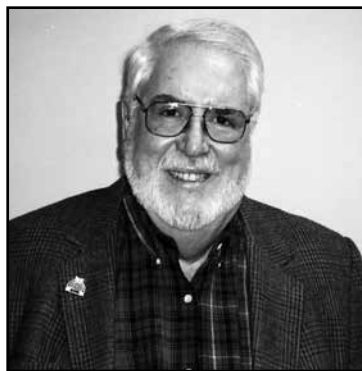
Eventually he became the race announcer at the Nashville Speedway in the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1972, Powell became the editor of *Amusement Business*, a position he held until 2006 when that publication shuttered. During those years, Powell learned to love all the industries the paper covered but significantly cherished his time with the outdoor amusement industry.

Ron Burback, Funtime Traveling Shows, said many years ago, "Do you know why we tell Tom so much? Because we could trust him."

After the closing of *Amusement Business* in 2006, Tom began writing a weekly column for the Outdoor Amusement Business Association. He submitted his last column one week before his death.

During his long career, Powell was the recipient of many



Tom Powell

awards and honors including an International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions board of director's special award, was inducted into the International Independent Showmen's Association Hall of Fame, the Showmen's League of America Hall of Honor as well as countless others.

Powell was preceded in death by his parents Tom and Alice, his brother Bobby, and his first wife and mother of his children, Rosamond.

He is survived by his wife, Christine; his children, Julia Mulherin and her husband Paul, Alice Stanley, Thomas and his husband Paul Hill, Kevin and his wife Anne Marie; his five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren and cherished nephew and nieces.

Powell's funeral service was held at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Donelson on Saturday, January 25, 2020.

A celebration of his life was held immediately after the church service at the VFW in Nashville.

The family asked that in lieu of flowers to send a donation to the International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA) Scholarship Fund in Tom Powell's name. The address is: IISA Scholarship Fund, 6915 Riverview Drive, Riverview, Florida, 33578.



Coming together at an International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions convention are former *Amusement Business* colleagues. From left, Pam Sherborne, Sue Nichols, Tom Powell, Tim O'Brien and Gina Guglielmi. COURTESY TIM O'BRIEN

Tom Powell remembered...

Pam Sherborne, *Amusement Today* (formerly of *Amusement Business*)

I worked for Tom at *Amusement Business*, from about 1984-1992. When I close my eyes and think back to those years, the thing I most remember about Tom was his booming laugh. And it never seemed to matter to me if he was laughing with or at someone else or laughing with or at me, that laugh always made me smile. I just couldn't help it. If I was mad at him at the time (which, okay, happened from time to time), I might shake my head but I still would have to smile.

Beyond the laughter, Tom was a great editor. When I forgot that, I would sit and watch him lay out a big *Amusement Business* issue or go through my copy and couldn't believe the speed of that pencil he would use.

A writer knows a great editor. He also was very caring. I knew he was always there for me even years later when *Amusement Business* was gone and he was writing for OABA. I will miss that. I will miss him.

Sue Nichols, *Amusement Today* (formerly of *Amusement Business*)

One memory of Tom is how the International Association of Arena Managers (IAAM) had an annual softball game in the city where the trade show was held.

For about the last 30 years or more, it was called the Tom Powell Memorial Softball Game. I think it was Earl Duryea of Ringling Brothers who came up with that name. We had so much fun, sometimes at a major league ballpark (in Toronto) and sometimes in a local park, wherever we could find a field to play.

Usually we went by a charter bus. Once the bus driver got us hopelessly lost on the way. We always had a good time.

The AB office was an absolute zoo to work in sometimes, with Tom bellowing from his office and Ray Pilzack constantly whistling, and a veritable cast of characters besides them.

Karen Oertley (Amusement Business)

There are so many stories, it's hard to know where to start. Tom was unique (never very unique which annoyed him to no end when it was misused).

He never met a stranger and fit in wherever he went, from the back of a small show to the owner's suite at the Super Bowl. A throwback, hard drinking sportswriter, Tom closed down every bar and hospitality suite and was the first one up and working the next day, remarkably remembering every conversation and detail from the night before.

Tim O'Brien (Amusement Business)

TP hired me at *Amusement Business* in 1985 and I moved to Nashville and spent 18 years working side by side with him. I owe my career in the outdoor entertainment business to the big guy.

I knew no one when I first started and he opened many doors for me. It's amazing how so many people in our industries trusted him to the fullest, especially in the carnival business. I would call up a show owner for an interview or to set up a visit and they would question me and ask me why I was doing this, not Tom. I couldn't get to first base. I would tell Tom that I was stonewalled and he would roar out with that great belly laugh of his. He would then call the person (with great joy) that I had just spoken with and let them know I was OK to talk with and to please work with me on a story. At that point I would be treated very warmly

on the lot.

Tom loved words and he wrote a lot of them. During the time I was copy editing his columns, I constantly had to go into his office and ask him to cut half of what he wrote because it was too long. I suggested he cut stuff out and create what we call a sidebar to his column with the rest. He would do that and when it came back to me, I had two columns I had to have him cut in half!

I often joked with him that he could write one story that would fill all pages in one, 24-page edition. He once said it would be no problem, but he would have to continue it the following week.

TP was a loyal man. Never once during my 18 years working for him did I ever feel that he did not have my back. He was just as loyal to dozens of friends in our industry as well. He loved people and he wanted people to love him in return.

An era has ended. He was the typical hard-nosed journalist who worked hard, drank hard, played hard and most of all, enjoyed life, each and every day.

Bill Alter (formerly of National Ticket)

Tom loved everyone and everyone loved Tom. He always looked at the bright side of everything. He was never judgemental. He really understood that everyone in life held a position and he respected everyone. He always had a very positive attitude. I loved Tom. My wife loved Tom. Everyone that knew Tom, loved Tom. He was a wonderful, wonderful person and my life-long friend. I already miss him.

Rick Reithoffer (Reithoffer Shows)

Tom Powell is the best ambassador that the outdoor amusement business every had. He was very close with my parents and I was very close to him, too. He had a mind like a trap. He knew everybody's name, where they were working and what they did before that. He never had a bad word to say about anyone. We could go to a baseball game with him and he could tell you who the managers were of the teams, who was before them and where they came from. We love Tom dearly. He will be missed. He has left a void that will be very hard to fill.

Bob Johnson (OABA)

"When I was first hired by the Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA) in 1994, the great Bill Alter invited me to have lunch with John Graff (retired IAAPA CEO) Tom Powell, then editor of *Amusement Business* magazine and Bill in Las Vegas at the Hilton Hotel, the site for many years of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE), Showmen's League of America (SLA) and OABA convention. The advice I received from those guys, especially Tom, was priceless and hilarious. All I did was listen to the advice of these great men on how to succeed as a new, association executive.

Right up to the end of his fabulous life as a prolific writer, he loved everyone in the amusement and sports industries, especially those who would spend a few minutes and cooperated to help him write about their families, their businesses. He never said an unkind word about anyone and Tom was respected for his ability to recall the facts, details and names, even they had forgotten.

It was privileged to have known Tom and to enjoy working with him.

ON THE MOVE

Interactive dark ride manufacturer **Alterface** of Wavre, Belgium, is adjusting its management structure to accommodate growth and spur innovation.

Stéphane Bataille has stepped up from COO to CEO, assuming operational and daily management at the company's headquarters. In this capacity, he will be working closely with technology partners and customers. Among his tasks will be to take Alterface's interactive technology to the next level along with **Gillian Basso**, the company's recently appointed chief information officer.

**Bataille**

Benoit Cornet, founder and former CEO of Alterface, has moved into the strategic role of president in order to pursue new business and market opportunities. Cornet also will represent Alterface as a newly re-appointed board member of the **Themed Entertainment Assn.** and continue to develop industry relations across Europe and Asia.

**Cornet**

Other new appointments at Alterface include **Etienne Sainton** as product manager and **François Danhaive** as program manager.

Orlando-based **Accesso Technology Group**, a leading provider of ticketing, point-of-sale and experience management software solutions for attractions and venues worldwide, has announced the return of **Steve Brown** as CEO, replacing **Paul Noland**. Brown, who founded the original namesake Accesso business in 2008 and, following various acquisitions, served as president and CEO for two years until 2018, will help Accesso refocus on its strategic objective of delivering revenue- and experience-enhancing solutions through its proprietary technology.

**Brown**

Richard Coleman has been named CEO of **American Resort Management (ARM)**, a growing hospitality management company with offices in Erie, Pennsylvania, and Grand Prairie, Texas. A cofounder of ARM, Coleman brings over 30 years of leadership experience in the hospitality, destination resort and attractions industry to the role. His career has encompassed extensive work in hotel, food and beverage, and conference center operations, as well as amusement and water park development and management. Coleman's expertise includes financing, branding, managing, and devising launch initiatives for single and multi-unit properties. Among ARM's clients is **Epic Waters Indoor Water Park** in Grand Prairie.

**Coleman**

Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania-based **Gateway Ticketing Systems**, a leading provider of ticketing, admission control and revenue-generating solutions, has announced a high-level hire and two key promotions as it positions itself for ongoing growth this year and beyond.

Peter Wolf joins the executive management team as the director of sales and marketing. In this role, Wolf will drive growth and profitability

through leadership and coordination of the company's sales, marketing and customer solution management activities, including account management and new customer acquisition. He comes to Gateway with over 15 years of sales and marketing experience — most recently as vice president of marketing and business development for **Glory Global Solutions**, a leader in cash-handling automation.

**Wolf**

Tom Chiarella, has been promoted from senior manager of product development to the executive management team's director of product role. Chiarella joined Gateway in 2014 as a program manager and in 2016 became a software development team lead. In 2017, he was promoted to product development management, where he added a third software development team and led the streamlining of Gateway's software maintenance and release cycle. Additionally, he worked closely with the customer service team.

**Chiarella**

Jamie Elswick has been promoted from business solutions architect to strategic account manager. In this role, he supports the key relationships with Gateway's enterprise customers. As a previous water park owner and department director for other parks, Elswick is able to grasp the needs and demands of the company's core theme park clients. This insight, combined with his 20 years of experience in selling software solutions to the attractions industry, positions Gateway for continued growth and success with its strategic accounts.

**Elswick**

A marketing professional with more than 15 years of experience, **Stephanie Johnson** has been named divisional director for **Legoland New York Resort**, which is expected to have its grand opening in early July in Goshen, New York. In her new role, the local native will direct, manage and create strategy to meet and exceed attendance, revenue and profitability goals for the 150-acre theme park. Johnson's professional background spans a range of industries from retail to commercial real estate. Previously, she was regional vice president of marketing for **Simon Property Group's** Premium Outlets division and senior director of retail development and operations for **Ralph Lauren**.

**Johnson**

Miami-based show control systems developer **Smart Monkeys, Inc.**, has promoted **Jason Pontius** to director of operations. He is responsible for spearheading the company's efforts to streamline overall operations and elevate client satisfaction. In his previous position as senior manager, Pontius was instrumental in positioning Smart Monkeys to become a premier provider of show control, network and media management solutions to the entertainment industry. Last October, the company announced the opening of a new office in Orlando.

**Pontius****OBITUARIES****'Anake Kau'i,' Walt Disney World entertainer**

WINTER PARK, Fla. — Kau'iealani Mahikoa Brandt, a beloved entertainer at Walt Disney World Resort's Disney Polynesian Village Resort, passed away Jan. 9. She was 87.

Best known as "Anake Kau'i" ("Auntie Kau'i"), Brandt was born in Hawaii in 1932. She was a hula master in her home state when Disney talent scouts recruited her to California to dance at Disneyland's Adventureland.

**Brandt**

In 1971, the company flew her to its brand-new Walt Disney World Resort to launch the first dinner show luau at Disney's Polynesian Village. It was to be a three-month assignment, but Brandt took to Florida and she became a resort fixture. In time, she was made the hotel's cultural ambassador — greeting guests with her handmade leis and grass skirts, and teaching anyone interested to dance the hula.

On Jan. 10, Walt Disney World president Josh D'Amato and other employees celebrated Brandt's life and contributions with a ceremonial tossing of leis into Seven Seas Lagoon.

Elizabeth 'Bette' Reithoffer, Reithoffer Shows

SUN CITY CENTER, Fla. — Elizabeth "Bette" Reithoffer, of the long-running Reithoffer Shows family operation, died Jan. 27. She was 99.

Reithoffer was born in Rawlins, Wyoming, in 1921. After graduating from Rock Island High School in Illinois in 1938, she worked locally as a secretary at Bituminous Casualty Corp. She met Patrick Reithoffer at a USO dance while he was training as a World War II B24 Bomber pilot, and following his service they wed in 1945 — resettling in Dallas, Pennsylvania.

**Reithoffer**

While teaching junior high school science and shop classes during the colder months, Pat operated a traveling midway, Reithoffer Shows, along the Eastern Seaboard each summer. At the time of his passing in 2007, Pat and Bette had been married for 62 years.

Bette Reithoffer is survived by two sons, Patrick III and Richard, and one daughter Jan Stoorza. She was grandmother to eight and great-grandmother to nine.

Tycoon Shin Kyuk-ho, founder, Lotte Group

SEOUL — South Korean billionaire Shin Kyuk-ho, founder of Lotte Group, a multinational corporation encompassing the Lotte World indoor / outdoor theme park complex, candy production, retail, construction and hotels, passed away Jan. 19. He was 98.

Born in Ulsan in 1921, Shin moved to Japan to seek his fortune. He started out delivering milk and newspapers before getting into oil production in 1944. The business ended after it was bombed by U.S. fighter aircraft early in World War II.

**Kyuk-ho**

Observing chewing gum's popularity with U.S. military forces, Shin founded Lotte in Japan as a maker of confectionaries in 1948. He expanded the company to his home country, establishing Lotte Confectionary there in 1967.

Lotte's holdings include the Lotte Giants professional baseball team, the Lotte New York Palace hotel in New York City and South Korea's 123-story Lotte World Tower.

One of Shin's sons, Shin Dong-bin, is Lotte's current chairman.

Edwin W. Stephan, founder, Royal Caribbean

MIAMI — Edwin W. Stephan, founder, longtime president and board vice chairman of Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, died Nov. 8, 2019. He was 87.

Stephan founded Royal Caribbean in 1969. In 1970, the company launched *Song of Norway*, the first ship purpose-built for warm-water cruising. The company grew into the world's second-largest cruise line and now operates 63 ships.

**Stephan**

Royal Caribbean saw many firsts under Stephan, including the introduction of wide, open-air decks. The round, cantilevered Viking Crown Lounge was among his concepts. The company also was the first to stretch a major cruise ship by inserting an additional midsection in *Song of Norway* in 1978.

"Ed was an inspiration," said Richard D. Fain, chairman and CEO of Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd. "Our heartfelt condolences go out to Ed's loving wife, Helen, and the children he adored."

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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► IRT hosts its largest Ride Camp — page 51 / Mack Rides develops inclusive coaster harness — page 52

Amuse Rides brings safety and smoothness to wooden coasters

AT: Tim Baldwin

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COUER D'ALENE, Idaho — Over the winter, ride maintenance is vital in the few short months that parks are closed. **Amuse Rides** is finding that the demand for maintenance work in the amusement industry is high. The young company is working on numerous wooden roller coaster projects over the off-season. These projects include Great American Scream Machine at **Six Flags Over Georgia** (Austell), Thunder Run at **Kentucky Kingdom** (Louisville), Comet at **The Great Escape** (Lake George, N.Y.), Rampage at **Alabama Adventure** (Bessemer), Timberhawk at **Wild Waves** (Federal Way, Wash.) and Wildcat at **Frontier City** (Oklahoma City, Okla.).

Amuse Rides started as a company in 2016. "We grew pretty quickly," said **Brandon Paul**, president. "There was a big need. When we start a new job, we keep them as customers and friends for life."

Paul is quick to admit his love of the industry and for those operators who share the same zeal. He is quite aware that not every park is backed by a big corporation, so he doesn't hesitate to respond to the smaller places in need as well as the big customers.

Currently, the company's projects are 75 to 80 percent



One of the high turns on The Great American Scream Machine gets extensive work done (above). The lift hill and first drop are also being refurbished by the Amuse team (right).

COURTESY AMUSE RIDES

repair work, with the remaining being installations of new rides.

"Every time we get a new park with a wooden coaster, we wind up going back every year," smiled Paul. "It's the fourth time for Kentucky."

"The safety of our rides and attractions is the top priority for Kentucky Kingdom, as it is for all of us in the industry," said **Bill Hargrave**, vice president of facilities and development, Kentucky Kingdom. "Naturally, we conduct daily inspections and undertake routine maintenance throughout the operating season. Once the season ends, all rides get a thorough once-over before we 'put them to bed' for the winter. A wooden coaster, like our classic Thunder Run,

requires particularly detailed attention to keep it in top condition and provide the best ride experience for our guests. We're fortunate to have worked with Amuse for the past three years on this vital off-season task."

The process is often a matter of prioritizing. "We ride a few times and walk the entire track," said Paul. "We then tell them what we consider a red zone — what they need to deal with right away — and then an orange zone on what they will need to take care of in a year. We give them like a three-year lookout so that they can plan."

Paul's team consists of 20-25 men, but he notes that during certain peak times it can grow as high as 35 workers.

"We have a few men who work on oil rigs, but they love working on roller coasters," said Paul. "They have two weeks on and two weeks off, so that allows them to [work on Amuse projects]."

One of the largest projects this winter is on Great American Scream Machine. Paul reported that the lift hill is going from seven layers of wood to nine. He's confident it will make the lift more durable and reduce sag



between bents. His team is also working on the motor house in addition to the structure to bring it into top condition.

In the past, Amuse has also worked with steel track on Bobsleds at **Seabreeze** (Rochester, N.Y.). "The mindset on the gauging and the smoothness on the profiling uses the same mentality and same goal — we're trying to make it smoother and transition better," said Paul. "Over time things settle — beams and footings. When things move on it, that is what causes things to no longer be smooth. The only difference for us at Amuse is that we have a different crew [with steel track]. I have certified welders and iron workers on those projects."

In addition to roller coasters, Amuse was commissioned to do work on a large waterslide at **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor** (Oklahoma City, Okla.). The Amuse team will refurbish that 60-foot structure and also install Trex decking on the top. The new decking offers numerous advantages over the painted wood that was previously in place.

tages over the painted wood that was previously in place.

One of the advantages of bringing in an outside company is that park operators do not have to stretch their own maintenance teams too thin.

"It has been a great partnership and a great way for us to keep up our classic wooden coaster with a minimal full-time team," said **Michael Schwitek**, general manager, Alabama Adventure. "The partnership allows us to show the Rampage the love it needs each off-season, even when we don't have the on-site time and resources to do it all ourselves. Rampage is our flagship attraction, so keeping the ride in its best shape is always the priority. We have been using Amuse annually and our guests can definitely tell the difference. A great guest experience is the best investment we can ask for."

Schwitek also believes that when visitors see the park responding to comments and complaints they have made, it shows management is listening to what they have to say.



Working on Kentucky Kingdom's Thunder Run has been an annual project.

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NAARSO Safety Forum draws 400, moves to Orlando in 2021

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — NAARSO's 33rd Annual Safety Forum, held Jan. 26-31 at the **Kingston Resort Hilton** in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was deemed a definite success, drawing 400 attendees with an additional 65 instructors.

New classes were introduced for 2020. A different way to handle the hands-on activities was implemented for the year. And new awards were presented.

NAARSO is a nonprofit organization dedicated to safety and providing resources for amusement industry professionals, including safety seminars and certifications. The organization holds an annual safety seminar as well as offers multiple ways for its members to stay up-to-date on safety information.

Sherrie Kontos, NAARSO office administrator, said it was a good year.

"Everything ran smoothly and we continue to imple-



ment new classes, technology and ideas to create a better learning environment for our students," Kontos said.

New class highlights included a class on hybrid wooden coasters presented by a representative from **The Gravity Group**.

"The **International Association of Trampoline Parks** taught a class on trampoline parks and **Mobile Weather Team** gave students an insight into understanding weather data to keep customers safe," Kontos said.

Also new for 2020 is the **Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Course**, which is a national certification valid for

five years. Required by many states, this comprehensive training program provides attendees with a detailed approach to aquatic facility safety and management.

A new-for-2019 that was repeated this year was the special three-hour class on ropes courses.

For the past several years that NAARSO has met in Myrtle Beach for the annual safety forum, the hands-on classes were held at Myrtle Beach's **Broadway at the Beach**. Instead of visiting that venue this year, three mobile amusement shows brought in rides for the hands-on session. The three shows bringing in rides were **Powers Great American Midway**, **B & K Carnival** and **Drew Expositions**.

"We also used a few stationary rides owned by **National Amusements** as the traveling rides were set up in adjacent parking lots," Kontos said. "The parking area also was owned by **Bill Prescott** of National Amusements."

Classes are held from

Monday-Thursday during the NAARSO forum. Students are able to select courses based on their skill levels and needs.

A review session for the NAARSO testing is held on Friday morning with the NAARSO certification tests given that afternoon.

Other exams presented throughout the week include the NAARSO operations test and AIMS certification testing.

For the 2020 year, NAARSO created new annual awards this year. One is the **Jack Silar Award** for Excellence in Education. Silar, who passed away Dec. 3, 2019, was a tremendous proponent for amusement industry safety. He was a safety consultant and a long-time member of NAARSO and served as chairman of the board. He served on the board and various committees of the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions**, the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks and Attractions Association** and the **Pennsylvania State**

Showmen's Association.

The new award was presented to **Gary Chubb** by **Scott Silar**, Jack Silar's son.

The other two new awards will be presented to students attending the Safety Forum and are chosen by nominations from instructors. These honors are the **Dan Dudley** First Time Attendee Excellence Award, which was awarded to **Roger Talley**, and the **James Barber** Seminar Excellence Award awarded to **Robert Knemeyer**.

The 2021 NAARSO Annual Safety Forum has been set for Jan. 25-29 in Orlando, Florida.

"NAARSO believes it's important to utilize different seminar locations, exposing our students to different hands-on locations," Kontos said. "Several members requested a seminar in Orlando, and, as we are a membership driven organization, we listened to them. We have not yet finalized the location of the hands-on day for Orlando."

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Largest Ride Camp yet draws more than one hundred attendees

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

FOLEY, Ala. — From a measuring stick slipped through a gate latch to an overhead loose article conveyor system, some of the year's best practices observed at client parks were put on display during the last day of the **International Ride Training LLC (IRT) Ride Camp**, held Feb. 4-8 at **The Park at OWA**.

In IRT fashion, the presentations were engaging, creative and generated laughter and applause. IRT owners and managing members **Patty Beazley**, **Cindee Huddey** and **Erik Beard** were very pleased with this year's results.

"Everything went really well," Beazley said. "We had a great Ride Camp."

The seminar drew 105 students this year, the largest yet. Last year, Huddey said, the number was closer to 80.

At the Ride Camp, participants are able to obtain or renew their **International Ride Operator Certification (iROC)**. This is IRT's certification program of ride operations training and performance standards. Ride Camp participants learn the IRT's training fundamentals and learn how to successfully train other employees.

The Ride Camp also gives participants a wide range of networking opportunities where they can share their challenges and suggestions.

Throughout the week, participants perform activities through their groups in which they are divided before the event begins. They also attend their own individualized break-out sessions depending on their focuses.

A sampling of some of this year's breakout topics included: Cultural Awareness 101 Training; ADA 101; Preventing Mid-



IRT owners and managing members (above), from right, are Cindee Huddey, Patty Beazley and Erik Beard. Far right is Paul Countinho, director of operations, The Park at OWA. All work and no play makes for a boring seminar, hence the colorful activity called the **Crazy Sock Parade** (right).
AT/PAM SHERBORNE

Season Melt Down; Survival Tools For Coaching Your Team; Operations Basics for Aquatic and Attractions; Guest Services, An Operator's Lifeline to Safety and Hiring Skills to Hire Excellent Ride Operations.

Participants also come together for larger class sessions, such as this year's keynote address presented by **Rick Goff** and entitled **Leadership 101: The Basics Never Change**. Goff is an operations and management consultant, a leadership trainer, an author and a former vice president of operations for **Six Flags Corp.**

IRT's Beard led the group in Audit Overviews and Trends.

The hands-on segment was held out in The Park at OWA. This gave attendees an opportunity to hone their own auditing skills at the rides. Other



2020 topics presented during the hands-on sessions included: Evacuation Demonstrations; Pre-Opening Checklists; Restraint Device Security Verification; Teaching Scripts for Operational Situations and the 10 Critical Components LIVE.

The best practices presentation was titled IRT's (and Oprah's) Favorite Things. It included some favored original creations as seen by IRT staff during their travels and audits to client parks. The measuring stick best practice was created at the **New Orleans City Park**, New Orleans, Louisiana, to discourage parents from entering a ride enclosure through the exit to retrieve their child.

The overhead loose article conveyor system was cre-

ated at **Canada's Wonderland**, Vaughn, Ontario, Canada, for riders of the Yukon Striker roller coaster. This latter invention won the park an *Amusement Today* Golden Ticket Award last year.

New is IRT's water park certification in non-lifeguarding positions. A Skill Level Tracks was added, giving Ride Camp students an opportunity to take more advanced courses in ride safety, ADA compliance and legal exposure, while less experienced students take foundational courses to improve ride safety performance and training effectiveness.

Additional opportunities allowed Ride Camp students to conduct two videotaped "teachbacks" to help hone and

The Park at OWA continues its growth

FOLEY, Ala. — The **Park at OWA**, which opened in July, 2017, continues its forward move with future plans including an indoor/outdoor water park and, hopefully, said **Paul Countinho**, director of operations, a new coaster.

And while both of these additions are tracking openings in early 2021, the park did complete a new luxury RV park. New retail establishments also opened in the **Downtown at OWA** portion.

The indoor/outdoor water park will be adjacent to the new hotel which is set to come into the area next year as well. The water park will have a retractable roof and siding being manufactured by **OpenAire Inc.**, Ontario, Canada.

"We don't have anything set in stone right now as far as a new coaster, but that is what we want," he said.

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strengthen training techniques.

Also new this year was the Ride Camp App. Students were able to download the app to keep up with the sessions and changes, which proved to be extremely helpful this year.

And with the app, IRT plans to expand technological offerings, Beard said.

"We are working right now on different portals so we can connect to all our clients," he told attendees. "You will be able to access iROC videos and manuals and you will be able to connect to each other and post helpful suggestions or ask questions."

Beard also said that each of IRT's clients will have their own private pages.

•ridetraining.com



Attendees at the IRT iROC Ride Camp have hands-on sessions inside The Park of OWA (left). Jessica Naderman, director of park operations, Valleyfair, gave a presentation on her park's approach to creating a positive work environment and culture at the 2020 IRT iROC Ride Camp (middle). Those attending IRT's iROC Ride Camp are divided into groups for certain activities (right). COURTESY MICHAEL FOLEY; AT/PAM SHERBORNE

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Mack Rides creates coaster harness, expands inclusivity

WALDKIRCH, Germany — More and more each year, both parks and ride manufacturers strive to be inclusive for visitors with physical challenges. This is seen on the midways, in ride stations, queue lines and the rides themselves. **Mack Rides** recently has developed a new roller coaster harness that helps riders who may not have been properly secured before with only the standard restraint.

"The discussion was going on for quite some time, but we were also asked by parks if there is anything to provide the ride to an even broader audience," said **Maximilian Roser**, marketing, Mack Rides. "With **Europa-Park**, we are happy to develop this very close to the operational experiences. We need ways to bring more people into our rides. Excluding them is not the way."

The restraint is a harness that will be handed to guests before boarding. They then put it on to determine everything fits comfortably tight. Once in the station, the rider boards the train at designated seats that have latches that attach to the restraint. The operators attach and secure the person to the seat with the restraint along with the standard lap bar.

Mack Rides has currently tested the harness with the Blue Fire coaster train system. The latches are both at the lower part of the seat, as well as at the level of the passenger's shoulder. Not all Mack coasters have the elevated seatbacks, so the company admits this is a first step in their ongoing efforts. However, if the Mack coaster vehicles have higher seatbacks, then the restraint system can be implemented.

When asked by *Amusement Today* how long the loading process would take, Roser reported, "As the process of putting on the harness is detached from the car, we can give the guest as much time as is needed. The process of attaching the harness to the seat takes about one minute in order to double check the rider is secured."

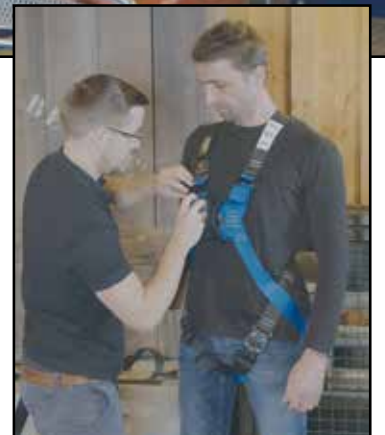
Mack Rides' Blue Fire coasters not only feature fast speeds and steep drops but inversions, as well. This new innovation allows riders who would have previously been unable to participate to enjoy the full thrills of the ride experience.

"At Mack Rides, we always believed in the whole family being our guests and our most valuable target group," **Christian von Everfeldt**, CEO, told *AT*. "Our efforts to accommodate everybody — not only concentrating on the height and age of a person but also to take care and to suit any special need — was an important target for us. We are very proud to now be able to share our rides with an even broader audience. In close collaboration with Europa-Park, we now begin rolling out this system with our newest coasters. We are working hard to find solutions for our existing rides around the world, as well. Sharing a laugh with everybody on our rides always was and will always be our sincere goal for the future."

—Tim Baldwin



Mack Rides' restraint harness latches into the coaster car to secure physically challenged riders.
COURTESY MACK RIDES



Six Flags chain earns Certified Autism Center designation

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** announced that each of its 26 parks will earn the Certified Autism Center (CAC) designation from the **International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES)**. This initiative will mark the first-ever family of parks to earn the designation at all locations.

"We are proud to partner with IBCCES to ensure that guests on the autism spectrum have the best possible experience when visiting our parks," said Six Flags Vice President of Safety **Jason Freeman**. "The certification process will equip our team members with the tools and training needed to better serve guests with special needs."

Many individuals and families with children on the autism spectrum or with sensory sensitivities find it challenging when visiting new places or planning family trips. The potential for sensory overload combined with a lack of understanding and awareness at parks and other recreational venues can often be overwhelming.

The CAC designation from IBCCES, the only credentialing board providing these services for the amusement and attractions industry, requires that at least 80% of guest-facing staff at each park complete a training and certification program through IBCCES as well as complete onsite audits and make a commitment to ongoing training. The staff training focuses on understanding the autism spectrum and strategies for communication, guest experience and safety, while the onsite audit will give each park techniques and guidance on additional updates.

"IBCCES is extremely excited to work with a family of parks with this level of commitment," said **Myron Pincomb**, IBCCES board chairman. "So many families just need more communication and understanding from parks and other attractions, so they can make those memories together that we all cherish."

"As a person on the spectrum, it is exciting to see more parks taking the extra steps to accommodate all guests," said **Dr. Stephen Shore**. "The commitment Six Flags is making to a true certification process is impressive and means so much to millions of individuals and families."

Six Flags will also be the first network of parks to implement IBCCES' Accessibility Card. The cards may be used during all Six Flags park visits.

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OPPORTUNITY



**Dynamic Attractions is currently looking to fill a
Theme Park Ride Service Technician position**

Job Description: The available position is multi-faceted and will require an individual with a wide range of skill sets and great personal drive. The candidate should be a self starter and be able to develop their own work production schedule with minimal supervision. The candidate will work with a team of professionals out of the Dynamic Attractions office in Orlando, FL. Compensation for this position includes a competitive salary, along with an incentive bonus plan and benefits.

Responsibilities:

- Traveling worldwide to perform service work on Theme Park rides
- Troubleshooting equipment to determine appropriate actions for repairs
- Using positive people skills to interact with clients and co-workers
- Ability to draw on experience and knowledge to repair unfamiliar equipment

Qualifications and Requirements:

- Experience in Amusement Ride maintenance and/or heavy industrial equipment
- Experience in Power Transmission equipment, Hydraulics and Pneumatics
- Up to 50% international travel per year
- Ability to lift and carry at least 50 lbs
- Ability to climb a 100 feet+ tall ladder
- Basic computer skills in Word and Excel

Additional Preferences:

- 3+ years' work in the Amusement Industry
- Aerial Lift Operator Certification
- NAARSO and/or AIMS Inspector
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If interested, please send resume and references to:
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